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MASTER GREGORY'S
CUNNING

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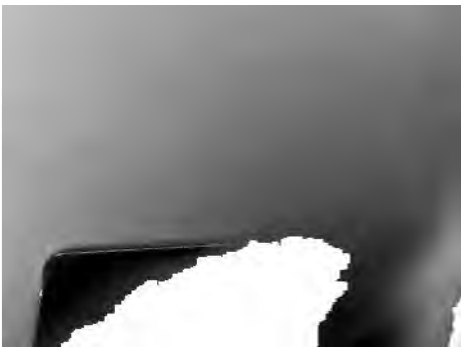

STORIES FOR ALL HOURS.

1489 f. 1732.

STORIES FOR ALL HOURS.

CLEREGIE'S LESSON

MASTER GREGORY'S CUNNING,

AND OTHER TALES
OF INSTRUCTION AND AMUSEMENT.

BY E. BROWN,
AUTHOR OF "ALICE GULLIS."

WITH COLOURED FRONTISPIECE.

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PREFACE.

THESE tales are intended for both girl and boy readers. Their appearance in print is anxiously awaited by the small members of one home circle. That they may become as great favourites with the juvenile members of many other home circles, is the hope of

THEIR AUTHOR.

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MASTER GREGORY'S CUNNING,

AND

WHAT HE GOT BY IT.

"But, Mousie,
. . . Foresight may be vain
The best laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft a-gley,
And lea'e us nought but grief and pain
For promised joy."

BURNS.

NO rice pudding, Master Gregory! You hav'n't been at the jam again this morning?

Master Gregory declared he had not.

"Nor been eating cakes?"

No; Master Gregory hadn't seen a cake, much less fingered one.

Mrs. Housekeeper Raine's eyes and spectacles looked extreme suspicion.

"Then I can't understand it at all," said she. "A hungry little boy like you to say no to this beautiful baked rice pudding! and lemon in it too! Isn't it good, Master Charles?"

Master Charles, who had a large plateful before him, declared *that it* was good.

"*Come now*, Master Gregory, just try a spoon-

ful," said Mrs. Raine, coaxingly; "come, I know you'll like it."

"No, thank you, I won't," said Master Gregory, shaking his head as if against physic, and pocketing his hands to put them quite out of the way of taking the proffered plate.

It is plain that Master Gregory means what he says; so, leaving Mrs. Raine to wonder at his silliness for refusing a rice pudding flavoured with lemon, we will explain who Master Gregory is, and how he comes to be sitting in the housekeeper's room of his godpapa, Doctor Heathorne's house.

Master Gregory is a young gentleman of six and a half years of age, but he looks like a sprite who might have lived centuries. He is pale and skeletonish; his eyes have cunning gleams in them, and his features odd twists. He looks, as the servants say, "unnat'ral" and scare-crowish, and, dressed ghost-like, would frighten anybody, they think. His papa and mamma are moving; that is why he and his brother Charles enjoy the great treat of spending a fortnight in London with Master Gregory's godpapa, Doctor Heathorne.

This gentleman is a physician, and all day long is so busy that his young visitors scarce catch sight of him; and, as he has no wife, Mrs. Raine, the housekeeper, has charge of the two little boys. She is a kind person, but with no experience of children, and she feels rather as if she had suddenly been made a keeper of strange animals at the Zoological Gardens. Not but what Master Charles *was quiet and* manageable enough; give him a *book, and there* he was, still and happy for the *rest of the day.* But Master Gregory! he gave

trouble enough for half a dozan children. There never was kitten, puppy-dog, or monkey, half so restless, so worrying, so mischievous as he. If taken to any of the London sights, he either dived out of the way amongst the crowd, and occupied his party in an anxious hunt after him, or he pulled and picked at valuables he ought not to have touched, and did irreparable or very expensively reparable damage.

Mrs. Raine had had enough of taking him out, and the butler had had quite enough of it too. The latter having to go one morning to a city warehouse, thought it would amuse the young gentlemen to accompany him. But Master Gregory made the butler heartily repent taking him, as he had not long been in the warehouse before he contrived to throw out of window, into the Thames below, a bunch of large important keys that he had picked up in the room. Previous to this he had drunk a glass of strong ale which had been poured out for the butler, but which Master Gregory had contrived to gulp down while the butler was engaged in conversation with the person he had come to see.

Cook, too, had dreadful complaints to make of Master Gregory. His first mischief was to flood the kitchen by setting running all the water-taps. Then his small fingers pilfered the dessert, delved into jams, disturbed jellies and other compounds which were required to set, picked cakes and the new bread, broke corners off tarts, and made tell-tale smears on the table linen.

Master Gregory, on the day that he refused the *rice pudding*, had spent nearly the whole *morning in the* kitchen. It was in vain that cook

put him out, in he came again like a troublesome cat or dog. He had made the discovery that his godpapa was to have a dinner party that night, and, moreover, that a plum pudding of Christmas quality and dimensions, was to form part of the entertainment. So there he stood, watching to see it made, his mouth watering as each rich ingredient was showered in, and at the delightful stick-stodge noise of the large mixing-spoon, as it moved about in the plum-dotted batter, or went scroop to the bottom of the pan. In short, his heart was more in that pudding than was the most buried shred of sweetmeat! No wonder, then, that he shook his head at, and pocketed his hands from, baked rice with lemon in it even.

It was silly of him to do so, for what was the plum pudding to him! He would be in bed before it was served, and should any of it return from the dining-room—a thing not likely he thought—he had no friends at kitchen to reserve for him the least taste of it. But never minding the impossibilities in the way of tasting it, as in the morning he had watched the making of the pudding, so in the evening Master Gregory was found in the kitchen a spectator of the large pot in which it was being boiled.

"Of all the worries I ever knew, this child is the worst, and I can say with a clear conscience that I envies neither his ma nor his pa!" declared cook, as Master Gregory bobbed in her way, and caused her to jerk out of a basin some liquid she was carrying.

"I wish Jane would put you to bed out of the way, that I do! I've nigh scalded you already, and

myself too," continued the flustered cook, addressing her tormentor.

"I would take *him* off to bed, but he won't go without his brother, and I don't see why Master Charles should be sent to bed a hour before his time for this one's mischief," said Jane.

"I don't think Master Charles would mind going to bed now, if you left him a light for a bit. You might put a candle in the gauze shade, then there'd be no chance of fire. Master Charles won't open the shade if you tell him not; and, Jane, you'd better get them to bed now for your own sake," added cook; "you won't have time for it just as the cloth's laying.'

"Come along, then, come up to bed, Master Gregory," called Jane, persuaded that cook was right.

Contrary to cook's and Jane's expectations, Master Gregory seemed quite willing to be led off to bed, and did not require to be chased, caught, and carried upstairs as on other nights. Master Charles was also agreeable to such early retirement, provided the light was left.

"I'm reading such a beautiful book, Jane," said he; "it's all about knights, and castles, and enchantments."

"Oh, my! that must be a beautiful book," said Jane, "but mind, Master Charles," added she, "to be at the end of a chapter when in a hour's time I come for the candle; I shan't be able to stay for no finishings.'

When downstairs again, Jane forgot to watch the time, and nearly let a second hour slip by before *she* thought of fetching the children's candle.

"My patience, it's half-past eight," she cried, looking up at the clock.

"Well, no matter if it is. Everything's ready, and the dinner-bell may ring in a moment," said cook, whose thoughts were upon her business.

"But I've forgotten Master Charles's light," said Jane.

"Well, you must leave it now a while longer," said cook; "you can't go away just as the dishes are being set on table."

This was true; but as soon as Jane had the opportunity, she scampered up the stairs, meaning to catch up the candle, bid Master Charles good-night, and be down again in no time.

"Oh, Jane! I'm so glad you've come at last!" said Charles.

"What, tired a'ready of your beautiful book, Master Charles," said Jane, half reproachfully, as if her neglect of the candle had been a favour intentionally conferred on him.

"No, I'm not tired of reading, but I want to know where Gregory is?" asked Charles.

"In bed, to be sure, alongside of you," cried Jane, wondering at Master Charles's absence of mind.

"That he isn't," said Charles; "I don't know when he got up, and he can't be dressed, because all his clothes are here."

"He's under the bed, the young monkey!" said Jane, stooping down to look. But Master Gregory was not under the bed, nor was he elsewhere in the room.

"*There now*, I shall have to hunt the house *down for him!* A nice hindrance, just when I'm

so dreadful busy! I could box his ears, that I could!" said Jane, losing all patience.

"Shall I dress and help to search for him?" inquired Charles.

"No, Master Charles, your getting up would only make things worse; you lie still, there's a good boy."

Master Charles very obediently lay down.

"There's one thing, Jane," said he; "you needn't look for Gregory in any part of the house that hasn't been lighted up. I'm sure he wouldn't hide up in the dark, he's much too afraid of it."

"Don't you worry yourself, Master Charles, I'll soon find Master Gregory, and bring him back to his bed, and I declare I'll tell master of him to-morrow, that I will," threatened Jane, as she left the room.

Notwithstanding Charles's opinion that Master Gregory would not hide up in the dark, Jane searched each room and passage on that floor, and the floor above. Holding her candle above her head, she looked into closets and under beds, opened large boxes, peeped behind doors and curtains, and penetrated into corners and recesses. Then, descending to the ground floor, she as carefully examined the breakfast-parlour, the library, the drawing-room, the hall. But vain her search, for not a glimpse of Master Gregory was to be seen anywhere! Jane began to be frightened, for it was certain he was not in the kitchen or in any of the places downstairs; he could not, unobserved, have entered one of them. Where then could he be? Had the child fallen out of window? *No, that* was impossible, for the windows at the

back of the house were all barred, and he could not have tumbled down from a front window, without the accident being noticed by one of the numerous passers-by in the street.

Jane went to the housekeeper's room to consult with Mrs. Raine.

"Master Gregory not to be found! And you put him to bed at seven o'clock!" exclaimed Mrs. Raine.

"I've searched for him throughout the house, except in places where he couldn't be; and if asked by the Queen, I could say no other than that Master Gregory ain't nowhere," said Jane, solemnly.

But Mrs. Raine was not to be so easily persuaded of this, and, taking a candle, she herself began a strict search for the lost child, in which she was helped by nearly all the servants, the waiters leaving the dining-room more than they should, as each thought of some hiding-place likely to be overlooked.

Cook alone did not join in the hunt, but shook her head, and repeated to every new listener that she had always thought Master Gregory "more of a imp than a child," and that it was of no use to trouble about such.

Meanwhile, Dr. Heathorne's guests were enjoying their dinner. The Doctor would have enjoyed his, but for his annoyance at the blunders made, and the neglect shown by the servants whose business it was to wait. If there was one thing above another which, at his dinner-parties, *the Doctor* was particular about, it was the wait*ing, and to-day* that was of the worst description. *Empty plates* remained unnoticed, if a guest called

for bread, potatoes were handed to him, and the servants not only were inattentive and blundering, but they also had the impertinence to whisper together in the very dining-room.

What could such conduct mean? Was anything the matter that the servants could not attend to their duties? Doctor Heathorne was asking himself these questions, when a message from Mrs. Raine made him quit the dining-room, with but a hasty apology to his guests for leaving them.

The servants had all somehow vanished out of the room, and the company, afraid that something very serious had happened, were feeling nervous and uncomfortable, when the silence was broken by two of them—a lady and a gentleman—calling out "Oh!" and moving back from the table as fast as they could.

"It's a dog! a dog under the table, I think," explained the gentleman, who seemed sorry to have jumped up and startled everybody.

"Oh! do you think it's only a dog? It pulled at my dress like fingers; and Mrs. Floss has been talking so about spirit-rapping" said the lady, shuddering

"Look! It's coming out, whatever it is," said a third guest, as the table-cloth heaved up, and there appeared from under it a diminutive figure clothed in a long white garment.

There was a general rush made away from the ghost-like creature, and several of the ladies screamed loudly, while others were too faint to stand. Mrs. Floss alone seemed able to bear the sight of anything so unearthly-looking as the white-clad apparition. She regarded it with great

interest, while it as earnestly fixed its deep-set elf-bright eyes upon the table. "Would that Doctor Heathorne was here!" murmured the lady; and she had her wish, for her host, attracted by the screaming, was just then entering the dining-room followed by the housekeeper, and quite a troop of servants.

"What is it, what is it?" demanded the Doctor, surprised to encounter his guests close to the door, instead of finding them in their places at table, and he looked from one to the other for explanation.

"We can't make out what it is, sir," began a gentleman, when Mrs. Floss interrupted him.

"Now, Doctor!" said she triumphantly, "now, Doctor! laugh at spirit-rapping as you may, you can't contradict the evidence of your own senses, you can't doubt your eyes that THERE stands a spirit at your own dining-table!"

Master and servants turned to where she pointed, and perplexed was the expression of their faces; the guests looked more awe-struck than ever, and Mrs. Floss threw back her head in the vanity of triumph, when a voice from the door—Jane's voice—exclaimed, in tones very distinct in the silence, "Well, I never! It's Master Gregory!"

A roar of laughter succeeded this announcement, joined in by all but the ladies, who had half fainted, and Mrs. Floss, who murmured disconsolately, "Only a little boy!"

"*Ladies* and gentlemen," said the Doctor, "*I'm very sorry* for the alarm my monkey of a *godson has* occasioned you. I don't know how

whence he comes; I only know that he was missed from bed half an hour since; that my servants have hunted hole and corner to find him; and that I was sharing the honour of search the third for the young rogue, when these ladies' screams brought me back here. Now, where did he come from?"

"From under the table," said a gentleman, laughing; "crawled out quite coolly and comfortably, while here we were screaming and hurrying out of his way like mad."

"Gregory, what brought you here? What did you get under the table for?" inquired his godpapa.

Master Gregory spoke never a word. His eyes, as they had been all along, were fixed on the table, or rather on the dish at the top of it. That dish was the plum pudding!

"Gregory, what brings you here?" said the Doctor, in a louder, severer tone.

"I want some plum pudding, godpapa, please," answered Master Gregory's shrill voice.

There was a second roar of laughter. It was amusing now to think that they had all been so tremendously frightened at merely a little boy, who had hidden under the dining-table to lay in wait for the plum pudding.

"Who puts this child to bed?" inquired Doctor Heathorne.

"Please, sir, I do," said Jane, coming forward.

"Then take him away," ordered her master.

"Oh! do give him some pudding! Only think of the long time he has waited, and under a table too!" petitioned a lady.

"Not a morsel should he have, had he waited there all night," said the Doctor, gravely eyeing his discomfited godson, "for I wish Master Gregory to remember, as the lesson of this evening, how much he has got by his cunning."

THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT;

OR,

OBSTINACY CORRECTED.

KNOW what it is, mamma; it's what we drink every evening.

"But tell me its name, Dora?"

"U," said Dora, not minding her mamma, but going on to the next letter.

"I don't wish you to say 'U'; I want the name of the letter that comes before 'U,'" said Mrs. Hulbrent, Dora's mamma.

"It's what we drink every evening," repeated Dora, persisting in an obstinate whim not to say "T."

"Why will you be so perverse, Dora? Why vex and trouble me in this way? You have no excuse for such conduct, for you know how naughty it is!" So remonstrated Mrs. Hulbrent; but she might as well have talked to the winds. Dora was a weak, vain child, and fancied it a fine *thing to keep* to her whim and be obstinate; so

there she sat in silent determination never to say "T."

The room Dora is in, is Mrs. Hulbrent's boudoir, a soft cushiony nest of a place, all comfort and prettiness. Everything about her is fresh, and bright, and new, even to the spelling-book full of tempting pictures; and if she looks through the bay window before her, above, she can see blue sky set off by a few plump white clouds, and, beneath, a grand spring flower show of lilacs, laburnums, daffodils, pansies, hyacinths, and other early comers, while beyond is the orchard—a second garden now of apple-blossom.

But Dora will not enjoy any of these things to-day. She will not sit in that pretty room, nor hear dear mamma read to her, nor enjoy her kind kisses and praise for being good, nor play in the lovely garden, nor look to see if her mustard and cress be tall enough to cut, nor venture on pulling a few of the radishes, that, just where the earth does not come up to the green top, show so invitingly red. No; Dora has preferred being obstinate to the enjoyment of all this, so now she is on her way to the nursery, where, for her punishment, she is to remain for the day, and amuse herself as she best can. I think she is sorrowful to go away, but, alas! she is not wishing to be good; she will not heed the small still voice that whispers in her heart, "Dora, do what you know is right, ask your mamma to forgive you your obstinacy, and speak out that unfortunate letter T!"—and so to the nursery she *must go.*

In the orchard I have mentioned are two large *pigs, do they* look up at the apple-blossoms and

blue sky? No; they grub away in the ground, and might as well be in a sty as in an orchard. Does it not seem as if Dora was following their example?

The next day, and for several days, Dora's reading lessons came to a stop—Mrs. Hulbrent having been suddenly called away from home. Dora felt very dull in her absence, but she had one selfish comfort—punishment was not to be continued to her while her mamma was away, and her papa did not seem to be aware of her obstinacy in not saying "T," at least he did not scold her or even mention the subject.

It was a great treat to Dora to be allowed, under Susan's supervision, to make breakfast and tea for her papa.

"Pouring out tea makes quite a woman of you, doesn't it, Dora?" said Mr. Hulbrent, as, with amused eyes, he watched her business-like proceedings at the tea-table, and the primness with which she sat on her high chair.

"I shall be six in three weeks' time, papa," said Dora, in a tone that meant that six was an age almost beyond childhood.

"Indeed! your birthday so near as that, and no present decided on! Come, let us settle that matter while mamma is away. Now think of what you would like best?"

Dora knew without taking the trouble to think; only she did not like to say. Last year her papa and mamma had given her a beautiful large baby-house, and they had promised that on her next birthday she should have a donkey to ride on. A donkey! could anything better be wished for? Dora believed not, as, ever since the promise, she had

exercised her imagination in picturing the happiness to be derived from trots, and canters, and even gallops, when she could ride well enough to feel safe at such a pace. When Rose Morris and one or two other little friends should share her pleasure, she would lend them her donkey—only not while he was quite new—she could not, just at first, spare him to anybody.

It was vexing that papa should have forgotten his promise, because Dora felt embarrassed how to remind him of it. She was thinking of her obstinacy to her mamma in the reading lessons, and conscience told her that she did not deserve a present at all upon her birthday, much less one of such value as a donkey. While she was hesitating what to say, her papa surprised her by coming to the point himself: "So you thought I had quite forgotten about the donkey, eh, Dora?"

"Yes, papa, I thought you had," said Dora, much relieved.

"And why didn't you remind me of it?" asked her papa.

"I don't know, papa," begun Dora; "I didn't like to—I thought perhaps I might not have it now."

"And why not *now*, Dora? I am as rich as I was last year when I made the promise."

Dora had no fancy for explaining *why;* she blushed and was silent.

"You have not changed your mind, Dora; that is, you wish as much as ever for a donkey?" asked her papa.

"Oh! more than ever, papa!" cried Dora, rapturously. "If a fairy came to me it is what I *should ask* her for, before everything else. If I

had been Cinderella' I would rather have had a donkey than the coach and six, the ball clothes, or the glass slippers and her fine prince!"

"Very well, Dora, then your birthday present shall be a donkey," said Mr. Hulbrent.

"And will it come in time for me to have a ride on my birthday?" asked Dora.

"Yes, I believe so," said her papa. "I think I shall not have much difficulty in finding a donkey of the kind I want—such as will suit you."

"Oh! any one will suit me, papa," cried Dora. "I don't care of what sort it is, so that it is a donkey."

"Oh, the one that I shall chose will be a true donkey, Dora; as wise a creature as yourself."

Dora laughed, and that ended the talk about the birthday present, though Dora's thoughts, as might be imagined, remained full of it.

Mrs. Hulbrent returned home after an absence of a fortnight, but, for the few days which then intervened to the birthday, she was too busy to be able to attend to Dora's lessons. This seemed fortunate for Dora, who, though she had not yet changed to wish to please her mamma, was very desirous that the letter "T" should not cast a black shadow over the birthday and its enjoyments. This, as it now appeared, was not likely to be the case; for nothing of the sort had been hinted at; the donkey was spoken of as a certainty, and the whole holiday, *that* was not going to be withdrawn. But though mamma might not meditate punishment, yet she did not appear so thoughtful as usual about Dora's amusements; for part of the customary birthday celebration was a

children's party, and now, though it was within three days of the happy time, not a child had been invited, and cook hadn't begun upon the iced-cake, trifle, jellies, tarts, or any other of the good things for the feast.

"Thursday," said Dora, speaking on the Monday, "Thursday, mamma, is my birthday."

"Yes, Dora, I know it is," answered Mrs. Hulbrent.

"I was afraid you had forgotten what day it was, mamma, because you hav'n't said who I am to have for my party, and hav'n't written the notes to their mammas."

"I have forgotten nothing, Dora; but it appears you have, or you would not suppose I could permit you the treat of a birthday party," said Mrs. Hulbrent.

Dora looked extremely blank, but said nothing.

"If," continued Mrs. Hulbrent, "my little girl would acknowledge her fault, say she was sorry, and prove her willingness to amend, she would at once be forgiven; nor is it yet too late to send out invitations for the birthday."

Dora felt much tempted to yield. It would be a dreadful disappointment to have no party. But then there was the donkey! That would make amends for everything, and that she was sure of; for papa had promised it quite unconditionally. Mamma couldn't prevent her having the donkey, cross as she was, said Dora to herself, imputing the disappointment of "no party" to her mamma's severity, instead of to her own obstinacy.

So the selfish child, not caring how naughty she was to her kind mamma, determined that she *would* not give up being obstinate for only the

party, since she could still have the donkey. And now that this was to be her all of enjoyment, she thought of nothing else from morning till night. She even dreamt of it, and in her sleep had such a delightful ride upon its back, going at a pace that, had she been awake, she would not have been donkeywoman enough to manage, unless holding fast by the pummel. It was disappointing to wake and find herself in bed, and not on donkey-back at all. But on Wednesday evening it was announced that the donkey had really come. How sparkling were Dora's eyes, and how bright her smile, when called out to look at her birthday present!

"Well, what do you think of it, Dora?" asked her papa, as the delighted child stood patting and stroking her new possession.

"I think it a beautiful donkey, papa; only when it is better fed it won't look so lean, and when it is groomed it will have a better coat; and why do its ears lap so?" said and questioned Dora.

"That, Dora, is a physical peculiarity denoting a moral one," said Mr. Hulbrent, drily.

Dora did not understand her papa, but he had answered her question, and not being a child of very inquiring mind, she was satisfied.

"Then to-morrow, papa, I shall have my first ride!" exclaimed Dora, dancing about and clapping her hands.

"To-morrow you will *mount* this donkey," said her papa, with emphasis.

It was late that night before Dora, happy and excited, could get to sleep, and next morning at breakfast she could barely eat. As soon as break-

fast was over, she tripped through the hall and upstairs to be dressed, and almost before the donkey could be saddled, reappeared in a pretty blue riding skirt, a broad-brimmed hat with a grand white feather in it, and holding in her hand a dainty ivory-mounted whip.

Mr. Hulbrent lifted his smiling daughter into the saddle, placed her foot in the stirrup, arranged her skirt, and then retired some paces, folded his arms, and leant quietly against a tree, leaving the business of the ride to Dora and her squire—the boy who had brought the donkey the night before, and who remained to take charge of it.

"Now, gee on, Donkey!" cried Dora, gaily, giving her steed a very mild cut with the whip, as if fearful of too spirited a start. But the donkey did not offer to stir, it did not so much as blink even, when Dora, growing bold before such calm apathy, hit it again and again, with all the strength of her little arm.

"Please beat it with your stick, and pull the bridle," said Dora, turning impatiently to the donkey boy, who stood watching her efforts in grinning idleness.

"'Taint no good to beat or pull him, miss," said the donkey boy, with a smile, as if telling some funny piece of news; "he's just the obstinatest beast on legs! Put anyone on ee's back, an' you may half kill him afore he'll budge a ha'porth!"

"Oh, papa! what a bad, horrid donkey they've sold you," cried Dora, in dismay.

"Sold me, Dora! I can assure you I have been sold nothing but what I particularly chose to buy," said her papa, coldly.

"But they didn't tell you it was a donkey that wouldn't go?" said Dora.

"Yes they did, Dora, and proved that fact to me, and then I was sure it was just the one to suit you, and that you could only be content with a donkey that, after its own fashion, won't say 'T.'"

"And shan't I have any other donkey than this disgusting thing?" asked Dora, tearfully.

"Is it a disgusting thing, Dora? and ought *you* to call it such?" asked Mr. Hulbrent, looking rather sternly at the little maid—a droll picture of misery, as with crying face and in her smart gear, she sat her dull, stiff, wooden-looking steed.

"This donkey," continued Mr. Hulbrent, "is to be pitied, not blamed; for cruel usage has made it obstinate; and had it had kind masters, it would now be as submissive and docile an animal as could be wished. You can see for yourself that it has been half-starved and much beaten. No wonder it has no spirit to work, and would rather bear a moderate thrashing than stir; for when it does its best it is only thrashed to do more, and when it is patiently carrying a great load, it has yet more put upon it. Under such hard, unjust treatment as this, a poor animal, unable to reason, may well turn obstinate. But, Dora, I know a different case to this. The case of a little girl, who, instead of being half-starved, and cruelly treated, is surrounded by every comfort a child can desire. She has pretty clothing, good food, a happy home, and many pleasures. She is not obliged to work hard, but only to tell the names of a few little letters to a gentle, kind

mamma, who every morning sits teaching her little daughter, that she may not grow up ignorant and a dunce. This mamma took care of the little girl when she was a helpless baby, and takes care of her still; tenderly nursing her when she is sick, and making each hour of the day pleasant to her when she is well. The child I speak of has been taught, and knows quite well that it is God who has given her so many comforts and blessings, and made her lot happier than the lot of the many miserable neglected little ones that are in the world. Is this child thankful? does she love God for his goodness to her, and try to do his will? Oh, no! she disobeys his first command to little children, that they should honour and obey their parents. She one day takes a whim into her head—such a senseless whim as one would think only an idiot child could have—and then, at her reading lessons turns obstinate as this poor donkey, though without excuses for her obstinacy such as we have seen he has for his. Tell me, Dora, do you think that such a little girl as this deserves a different birthday present from that I have made her; or is it not the most suitable one that could be selected?"

What could Dora answer to this appeal? Nothing! she could only go on crying. Her papa then took her down from the donkey, and let her run away to hide herself in her own room.

When there, she threw herself on the floor half choking with sobbing. Was there ever such a miserable birthday! was there ever so miserable a child as herself! Papa was angry, the donkey boy had laughed at her, and Nanny, her maid, who passed her on the stairs, had tried to hide

that she was smiling, and mamma—— Dora was about to add to her lamentation that mamma, too, did not care how she was sorrowing; when, before she was hardly aware that the door had opened, she found herself in her mamma's arms. Yes! dear, kind, loving mamma, had come to comfort even a naughty child, and Dora had her cry out in her lap, instead of on the hard floor.

Dora—nestled in that soft clasp, her sobs hushed by kisses—felt, as she had never before felt, how precious to her was her mamma's love. And then a dreadful thought came into her mind, "If mamma should die, as little Esther Wyland's mamma had died!" Dora trembled at such a possibility, and joining her hands together as she lay still in her mamma's arms, she prayed, "Oh, dear Father in heaven, make dear mamma live a long long time to take care of her little Dora, and make Dora a good obedient child!" Then she asked her mamma to put her down, as she wanted to fetch something.

Mrs. Hulbrent sat still, awaiting her daughter's return, little thinking that Dora's "something" meant the spelling-book. But that was what Dora had gone to fetch, and, returning with it, she stationed herself at her mamma's side, and opening the book at her place, and pointing to a certain letter crossed at the top, she took breath and resolution, and shouted out "T!" Then, throwing her arms round her mamma's neck, Dora whispered, "I'm very sorry for having been so naughty to you, dear mamma, and I *will* try not to be obstinate any more."

It may interest the reader to know that Dora's birthday was kept that day month. That then

she had a capital ride on a new donkey—one that *would* go—and that in the evening a large party of children, Dora presiding, sat at a long table on which were an iced-cake, a trifle, jellies, custards, fruit, tarts, and cakes—in short, quite a confectioner's stock of good things; and that Dora was wished many happy returns of the day by her little friends.

The obstinate donkey still remained in Mr. Hulbrent's stable, that no one might more than half kill it, to make it move. But, whether from Dora's presents to it of nice raw carrots, or from the general kind treatment it now received, or from the good example of the other donkey, it quite changed in character, lost its obstinacy, and became as willing as the new donkey. So Dora took it for her own riding, and presented the other to Rose Morris, and the two little girls had many a happy ride together, when the apple orchard was pretty with red fruit, instead of pink blossoms, and the two pigs grunting their satisfaction over wind-falls.

GERTRUDE AND BERTHA;

OR,

THE BLACK RABBIT.

GERTRUDE and Bertha Linguard were two younger children in a large family. Gertrude, at the time of my story, was seven, and Bertha six; so that they were capital companions as far as age went. They suited each other in other respects also, and agreed very well, but on these terms—namely, that Gertrude should have the best of everything in toys and privileges, and Bertha fare as she could. They were both, like many other little girls, very thoughtless of giving trouble, very fond of cake, pudding, and nice things in general, and sometimes silly and naughty enough to cry because it was not right for them to do as they wished, or to have exactly what they wanted.

It happened one day that Mr. Grant, a gentleman who was staying with Mr. Linguard,

and who had taken very kind notice of the children, was going to pay a visit to some intimate friends in the neighbourhood, and fancying he would like a little companion for the drive, and being anxious, too, to give one of his little friends a treat, asked mamma if Gertrude might go with him. Mamma said yes; so Gertrude, in delight and glory—a promise of driving, or rather of holding the reins when beyond the town, having been made her—was soon seated in the pretty pony carriage, upright and tall as so diminutive a little person could sit, and, a few minutes after, had given a parting nod to poor Bertha, who, from the nursery window, looked down upon her sister with very longing eyes. Mr. Grant learned from Gertrude as they trotted along, that a purple cloud in the distance was of "just the same colour as Mrs. Barlow's dress that she had come to tea in;" that Gertrude "didn't like walking in a field of beans, because there were sure to be a great many bees there, and they might sting her;" that she and Bertha wished day by day that blackberries and nuts would ripen, and that mushroom-time would come; that she, Gertrude, "had picked ever so many real mushrooms last year, but that Bertha had only put toadstools into the basket, which had to be thrown out of it again."

Chattering thus—being wholly taken up with the serious business of driving, and then being sure, over and over again, that they never could get along underneath the low-hanging boughs that made a small green tunnel of the lane, and finding, when she reached them, that they were as high up as some already passed—Gertrude was surprised to find that the house with large

gates which they were just upon, was the one they were going to, and that a drive of four miles had occupied only the short time they seemed to have been coming.

Gertrude was now in a happy bewilderment of speculation—as to what kind of servant would open the gate when the bell had been rung—as to the house being a pretty one inside—as to the lady being a nice kind lady, or the reverse (there were no children she knew)—and, as to what they would have for dinner!

The first person belonging to the house that Gertrude saw, was a young lady of about fifteen or sixteen years of age, so blooming and smiling that Gertrude at once liked her, though she took no fancy to the small barking dog by which the young lady was accompanied.

"Oh! you've brought me a little companion, I see," said the young lady, looking at Gertrude, as she shook hands with Mr. Grant.

"Yes, and I can assure you, you'll find her an amusing one," said Mr. Grant, laughingly, as he handed the reins to the man who had come to take charge of the carriage, and then jumping out, went round to Gertrude to jump her out too.

"I'm afraid of the dog, Mr. Grant," whispered Gertrude, holding back as if not wishing to leave her place of safety.

"Ah! but you needn't be," cried Laura, who had overheard the whisper; "Phillis never bites; but, look here, I'll hold her fast in my arms, then she won't bark.

"There, now we'll shut Phillis out as you don't like her," said Laura, when she and Gertrude were entering the house.

"I should like her if she didn't bark," said Gertrude.

"Well, she isn't always barking, so I daresay you and she will be great friends before the day is out," said Laura, ushering Gertrude into the drawing-room, where they found Mrs. Mainwaring, the lady of the house, who was Laura's aunt.

"You must speak very loud to my aunt—quite scream to her, for she is very deaf," said Laura to Gertrude, when Mrs. Mainwaring was welcoming her little guest.

But Gertrude did not speak at all; she only stared solemnly, as if the deaf lady were some great and rather unpleasant wonder.

Mrs. Mainwaring, waiting for Gertrude's answers to some kind questioning about mamma and sisters and brothers, put up a large ear-trumpet for the little girl to speak through, as by means of it she could hear even a low tone; but no answers came, for the ear-trumpet only made Mrs. Mainwaring seem doubly formidable, and awed Gertrude into deeper silence and amazement.

"Ah! I'm not to find out that you have a tongue, am I, dear? You don't fancy speaking through this ugly thing, do you? Mamma hasn't an ear-trumpet, and you don't know what it means. Well, never mind, I perhaps can find you something you can understand and will like better," and Mrs. Mainwaring handed Gertrude, from off the side table, a bright silver basket.

Gertrude did appear quite to understand this, for, dipping her hand into it, her fingers soon possessed themselves of a nice Shrewsbury cake.

Mr. Grant, Mr. Mainwaring, and some other

grown-up people, now came into the room, and a conversation was begun much too serious for Gertrude to be interested in. Having already thoroughly examined the room, she would have felt dull, but for the interest afforded by the basket of cakes again and again handed to her by Mrs. Mainwaring, until Laura feared the little girl's appetite for dinner would be quite spoilt, and so proposed Gertrude's accompanying her into the garden.

"What a nasty black horn thing that lady has; I wouldn't have it," said Gertrude, when she and Laura had stepped from out the window on to the lawn.

"Yes you would, if you were deaf as poor aunt is," returned Laura. "You would wear spectacles if you couldn't see well, and you would have an ear-trumpet to listen through, if you couldn't hear well without."

"I never mean to talk to deaf people, I don't like speaking loud," said Gertrude.

"But if you were deaf you would like to be talked to, wouldn't you?" inquired Laura.

"Oh, but I'm not deaf," returned Gertrude, triumphantly.

"But you may be some day," said Laura. "My aunt was not deaf until after she was quite grown up. When she was your age she heard as well as you do."

"Did she?" exclaimed Gertrude, surprised; and then added, "if I was to be deaf, I should like people to talk to me all day long, it would be so dull if they didn't."

"And you would think people very selfish and unkind if they didn't talk to you!"

"Yes, I should," replied Gertrude.

"Well then, Gertrude, ought not deaf people to think you very selfish and unkind if you don't take the pains to talk to them? In future you must not say, I shall not do this or that for people because I don't like doing it; but you must say, I will do it, however it may trouble me, because in their place I should like to have it done for me."

"I will talk to Mrs. Mainwaring when we go in," said Gertrude, "but don't let us go in a long while yet."

Laura could not help smiling at this *naïve* speech, but assured Gertrude that if she liked she could stay out till dinner time. "And how many brothers and sisters have you?" inquired Laura, by way of changing the conversation.

"Two brothers and four sisters besides Bertha," replied Gertrude.

"Ah! I see, Bertha is *the* sister. You are very fond of Bertha, Gertrude?"

"Yes, very," replied Gertrude, and then added immediately, "Bertha did such a bad copy this morning, all blots and crooked. Ma said it was the worst writing she ever saw."

Again Laura could not help smiling. Gertrude had a strange way of showing sisterly affection, telling out Bertha's misdoings so unnecessarily.

"And were all your school duties quite rightly and nicely done?" asked Laura.

"I didn't quite know my lessons," admitted Gertrude, but with hesitation.

"Ah! I thought not," said Laura. "We never do quite know our lessons when we are so very ready to tell of other people's bad copies."

"And have you and Bertha nice dolls?" inquired Laura, as they walked on.

"I've two wax dolls—such beauties! But Bertha's doll is such a thing! it's only wooden, with no hair and no legs," answered Gertrude.

"Ah! mind, you'll fall," cried Laura, as Gertrude stumbled over a stick in the path.

"Bertha had such a fall the other day; she was on before me, running, and her foot tripped and down she came. Her hands and arms were so scratched!" said Gertrude.

"And you stopped to help her up and comfort her?" asked Laura.

"No, I got first to the swing. It was for that we were both running; but Bertha set off before me, and I shouldn't have beaten her only she fell down."

Laura and Gertude had now arrived at a sort of farm-yard, where were barns, hay-ricks, stables, and cow-houses on a small scale; and about it as many ducks and fowls as a farmer would have kept.

Gertrude was delighted with these, with the pigeons, a little white calf only a few days old, a litter of tiny puppies, and the pretty downy inhabitants of a rabbit-hutch, Laura's very particular pets.

"Why does that black rabbit have a hutch all to itself?" asked Gertrude.

"Because it is too greedy to be with its brothers and sisters, Gertrude. It always pushed forward to get everything for itself, and would not let the others have any peace while they were eating. So now it has to live alone, and it has to wait to be fed until the others have had their

food, for I always feed it last to punish it for its greediness."

"I'm glad you do," said Gertrude, "for I think it a very naughty rabbit to be so selfish."

"I'm afraid that, if you were a rabbit, Gertrude, you would be very like it," said Laura.

"I'm sure I shouldn't be at all like it, Miss Laura; what makes you think I should?"

"Because the rabbit would make just such a little girl as you, if it could be changed into one. I mean it would do the same kind of things that you do," replied Laura.

"What things would it do?" inquired Gertrude, anxiously.

"Well now, suppose her a little girl, she would tell me about her sister's bad copy, just in the way you did."

Gertrude hung her head.

"She would keep two beautiful wax dolls for herself," continued Laura, "while her little sister had only an old broken wooden one."

Gertrude was blushing now, and fidgeting about very uncomfortably

Laura went on. "She would see her sister have a bad fall, and not stop to help her up, but run on to get first to the swing. In short, Gertrude, she would be a selfish little girl, as she is now a selfish rabbit. She wouldn't love her neighbour as herself, and do to others as she would they should do unto her."

"That's in the Catechism," cried Gertrude; "it's part of 'My duty towards my neighbour.' We say a piece of it every day to mamma."

"*Poor* black rabbit!" said Laura, turning to

it, "I think I won't punish you any longer, but let you have your meals with the rest."

"Why?" asked Gertrude, in surprise.

"Because, now I come to reflect, the rabbit is not so very naughty; there is a great deal of excuse to be made for it. You know it cannot be taught any duties to others, so we must expect it to be selfish. But little girls, who know it is their duty to love others as they love themselves, have no excuse for their selfishness; and when they try to get and keep the best of everything for themselves, and never trouble themselves to be good-natured and to make others happy, why then, of course, they seem more disagreeable, unamiable creatures than even greedy rabbits."

Gertrude seemed thoughtful, and Laura for a while let her think; but afterwards Laura proposed, by way of amusement, a game of dodge round some bushes that skirted the lawn.

I hardly know which more enjoyed the game, Laura or Gertrude, though the latter made most noise; she could not help a loud scream whenever Laura was near upon catching her. They were still playing when the dinner-bell rang and called them in.

"Now, remember your promise to talk to my aunt," said Laura, half slily, as they entered the house.

But Gertrude just then had no opportunity of keeping her promise, for during dinner she sat a long way off Mrs. Mainwaring, and the number of grown people at table made Gertrude feel shy, especially as some of them teased her with questions she could not answer, laughing at her perplexed looks. And what made them laugh at her

too was her saying, when asked what she would have, "I should like some chicken, if I may have currant-jelly with it the same as if I took mutton?"

But, notwithstanding the teasing—which was all meant good-naturedly, though Gertrude was not wise enough to understand it as such—Gertrude was very sorry when dinner was over, and it was so near the time of her setting off home. She was wanting to talk to the deaf lady, to make some amends for her ungracious behaviour to her in the morning, but she could not do so, because Mrs. Mainwaring was conversing with one of her friends. But, just before Gertrude went to have her things on for the drive, Mrs. Mainwaring was kind enough to remember the cake-basket, and to hand it to Gertrude, luncheon and dessert having reduced its contents to only two of the nice Shrewsbury cakes.

"There! you must put those in your pocket," said Mrs. Mainwaring; "one you must eat yourself when you get home, and the other you can give to a little sister."

Gertrude actually spoke through the ear-trumpet to say, "Thank you, ma'am," to Mrs. Mainwaring.

"Do you know which of these two cakes I'm going to give Bertha?" said Gertrude to Laura, who was tying her hat-strings for her.

"No," said Laura; "is there any difference in them?"

"Yes, one is all black and screwed up; *that* I mean to keep for myself; the other is a beauty, *that* I mean to give to Bertha, then I shan't be *like the* black rabbit, shall I?" said Gertrude.

Laura smiled approvingly, and said, "Take notice, Gertrude, if giving the best to Bertha doesn't make you feel happier than taking it for yourself would."

Gertrude was very sorry to say good-bye to her friend Miss Laura, and also to Phillis, with whom she was now on excellent terms; but it was agreed between herself and Laura that she was to come again, accompanied by Bertha, and spend a long day at Mainwaring House

It was golden sunset as Gertrude and Mrs. Grant repassed the bowery lanes. The bees were on their way home too, tired of honey-getting, and perhaps yawning with sleepiness, while the beetles, just fresh out of their holes, made Gertrude wince, as they nearly bobbed into her face in their bolting heedless haste to get along.

This time Gertrude did not chatter much. She was thinking of all she had to tell to Bertha, and, above everything, of the two little cakes, and how surprised Bertha would be to receive "the nicest one;" and she was so impatient to reach home that the evening drive seemed double the distance of the morning one; but at length she was at her own gates, and saw little Bertha on the door-steps ready to welcome her.

"I would sit up till you came, Gertrude, but I've been so sleepy," said Bertha.

"Look, Bertha, look what I've got!" were Gertrude's first words, as she held the cakes up to Bertha's view.

"Give me a little bit of one, please, Gertrude. I havn't had anything nice all day," petitioned Bertha.

"One whole one is for you. Mrs. Mainwaring

said so, but she didn't say which, so I'm going to give you the nice one, Bertha. It's ever so much larger and better than the other."

"Oh, Gertrude, how kind! but don't you want the nice one yourself?" asked Bertha.

Gertrude for answer put the nice cake into Bertha's little hand. "And I'm going to give you one of my wax dolls, which you like best," announced Gertrude, before Bertha had recovered her surprise about the cakes. "Can you guess why?" continued Gertrude.

Bertha of course could not.

"It's because I don't want to be like Miss Laura's black rabbit," said Gertrude.

"A black rabbit, Gertrude!" cried Bertha, looking wonderingly in her sister's face. Gertrude had now to give Bertha the history of her visit, and to tell her about Miss Laura, and the greedy black rabbit that she would "rather do anything than be like."

From this time Gertrude experienced a new kind of enjoyment, the enjoyment so pure and lasting, of making others happy. Bertha now was not always the one obliged to give up, and make do with the worst, but the sisters vied with each other in acts of good nature and kindness, and it was often pretty to witness their little deeds of self-denial practised in one another's favour. Not but what Gertrude was still at times tempted to be greedy and selfish, but I am happy to say that the remembrance of her day at Mainwaring House, generally speaking, stirred up a resolution in her to profit by the warning of the BLACK RABBIT.

THE COCKATOO;

OR,

JANET'S IMPATIENCE.

"I DON'T think they mean to send it, mamma; I don't believe it will come at all, said Janet, fretfully, as she stood at the window one cold autumn day, straining her eyes to look as far as she possibly could down the road.

"Really, my dear child, you do nothing but fidget after that bird. I almost wish Ruth had never made you a present of it," said Mrs. Tamplin, who was engaged writing, and did not want to be disturbed.

"I don't fidget, mamma, only it hasn't come all the morning, and I dare say it won't come at all now," remarked Janet, in a desponding tone.

"But Ruth did not say it was to come this morning; she only promised it should be sent to you, and did not mention when. You have not

the least cause to fear your bird's not coming at all, as you say; though perhaps it may be to-morrow or the day after before you can have the pleasure of welcoming it."

"To-morrow! or the day after!" This was but cold comfort for Janet, who, though she had expressed herself so hopeless about her bird's coming at all, was in reality expecting to see it every minute, as her eyes greedily fixed themselves on each vehicle likely to contain, and each man, woman, and child likely to be carrying a bird-cage.

"Mamma," said Janet, after a long silence, "perhaps it may be inconvenient to Ruth's landlady to send my bird, and I have been thinking that I had better take Joe with me and let him fetch it?"

"You must remember, Janet, that Ruth objected to this when I proposed it. The landlady has been very kind to Ruth, and is attached to the bird, and I dare say Ruth did not want her to seem obliged to part with it just the first minute she was left in charge of it, as would be the case if we sent for it now. So, Janet, you must really wait in patience till your pet arrives; and indeed I should be glad for Mrs. Jedson to keep it a day or two; she will be so very dull now Ruth has taken her departure."

The subject of Janet's anxiety was a cockatoo, which she had not yet seen, but which had been presented to her a few days before, as a last keep-sake, from Ruth, her old nursemaid, who was parting with it on account of accompanying her husband out to one of the colonies. Ruth did not *at all like leaving* behind her "Prince Charlie," as

the cockatoo was named, but since she was obliged to do so, it was some consolation to her to know that from thenceforth he would be the cherished pet of her dear Miss Janet, who promised, many times over, to take the greatest care of him, both for his own and for Ruth's sake.

Mrs. Tamplin in vain urged Janet to occupy herself in some way, either with work or reading, which would make the hours pass more quickly, and be the means of subduing her impatience. Janet would continue to stand in idleness at the window, wearying herself with vain watching, and inflicting upon herself a hundred shocks of disappointment, as again and again she fancied some one in the distance to be the bearer of her bird, but on a nearer approach, found them to be laden simply with a bundle or a basket. By giving way to her impatience, Janet not only fidgeted herself out of all appetite for dinner, but into such peevishness and discontent that she began to think it very unkind of her mamma to let her be anxious about the cockatoo rather than agree to so simple a plan as his being fetched. Janet—like others disposed to be wilful—was not to be convinced there could be a reasonable obstacle in the way of *her* way; she was quite sure that Mrs. Jedson, instead of minding Prince Charlie's being fetched, would, on the contrary, be rather glad to be spared the trouble of finding a messenger for him. In short, Janet began to fancy herself wiser than her mamma, and to feel it very hard that she must submit to her judgment in a matter she herself knew best about.

As soon as Janet's dinner and her mamma s lunch was over, Mrs. Tamplin had occasion to go

out to make some calls. She left Janet still a watcher at the window, and half feared she would not have moved before she came back. But on her return, after an absence of about two hours Mrs. Tamplin was agreeably surprised to find Janet a long way off from the window, and to see perched on her shoulder a beautiful cockatoo, of perfect whiteness, save the primrose tuft on his head, and the same delicate coloured edging to the feathers of his wings and tail.

"Oh, mamma, isn't he lovely!" cried Janet "And he has such a soft voice, and speaks in the sweetest way—not at all like Mrs. Willoughby's screaming parrot. And he is so good and gentle, only his claws catch in my hair. No, no, you mustn't do that," said Janet, speaking to Prince Charlie, who, in the effort to scramble up higher, was tangling her curls in anything but an agreeable manner, though it only made Janet laugh.

"Well! Prince Charlie is a handsome fellow!" exclaimed Mrs. Tamplin as she stroked the bird, and then added, "how good of Mrs. Jedson to send him so soon! You see, Janet, you need not have been so impatient and wasted your whole morning fidgeting lest he shouldn't come at all."

As Mrs. Tamplin thus spoke, Janet's face, from being bright, was clouded by such a look of unhappiness, that her mamma was satisfied she was aware of having shown herself a very silly little girl by her morning's conduct, and was feeling very proper shame and sorrow for it.

Janet, before the evening, had discovered yet more accomplishments and excellences in Prince Charlie; she thought at first that "Pretty Cockatoo" and "Prince Charlie" was all he could say;

but when he began to feel more at home in his new quarters, he startled Janet by calling out "Ruth," and, as his old mistress did not make her appearance, he added, by way of persuasion to induce her to come, "dinner's ready." His next feat was to dance to the music of a barrel-organ that was playing outside the window, and as Janet was gazing at him in delighted wonder, he stopped, and looking up in her face knowingly, asked, "Will that do?" In fact, as the parlour-maid, who had witnessed Prince Charlie's dance, reported in the kitchen, "no one would believe but what that bird had as much sense as a human being."

Prince Charlie had the honour of accompanying Janet in to dessert, after Mr. and Mrs. Tamplin's dinner, when the cheerful influences of brightness, warmth, and the smell of good things awakened his powers, and made him show off to the best advantage, fascinating everybody, and winning such indulgence that he was only laughed at for his boldness in helping himself to clawfuls of cake or fruit.

"I feel I ought to set you up with a show-cart, Janet, and let you make your rounds with Prince Charlie," said Mr. Tamplin, laughing; "he would soon make your fortune. You could advertise him as the 'Cockatoo Phenomenon,' or, perhaps, it would be better to style him 'Phœnix' at once."

Janet quite believed that a great many people would come to see Prince Charlie were he exhibited in a show, and that he was quite worthy of a place amongst the wonders of the world. But yet, had not everybody's attention been taken up

with the bird, it would have been noticed that his little mistress seemed troubled rather than joyous, and was neither so animated nor so smiling as was usual with her when anything pleased her.

"The worst of having a pet of this kind is, that just as you get to like it, it falls ill and dies," observed Tom, Janet's brother. who was rather fond of alluding to drawbacks.

"Prince Charlie shan't get ill," said Janet, earnestly; "he will have too much care taken of him for that."

"Now pray don't make Janet anxious, Tom," said Mrs. Tamplin, noticing that Janet seemed disturbed by what her brother had said. "I'm sure there's every likelihood of Prince Charlie's living out the natural term of his existence. How successful Mrs. Willoughby has been with all her feathered pets! and Mrs. Garnet's cockatoo (not so fine a fellow as this) seems to have excellent health."

"But this one looks to me of a very delicate sort," persisted Tom, "and I believe he has a cold already, he's sneezed like that half a dozen times since he's been in here."

"I'm sure he hasn't a cold, he can't have one," said Janet, quickly, "the noise he makes isn't sneezing, it's only a way he has; and Tom, you know nothing at all about birds, and only talk like this to be cruel and tease me;" and Janet began to cry, but was soon soothed by her mamma, who again scolded Tom for trying to awaken his sister's fears about the well-being of her pet.

But though all were against Tom that evening, the next morning it was feared he would prove but *too true* a prophet, for Janet awoke to find poor

Prince Charlie a drooping spiritless bird, not at all the lively chattering fellow that had so amused her yesterday. "Perhaps he is only hungry," thought Janet; "he may be accustomed to a very early breakfast, for I dare say Ruth was up long before this." But it was not so, for Janet could only coax Prince Charlie to eat a very small portion of his breakfast, though she had made it as nice as possible for him.

Janet's heart sank as she stood before the cage, irresolute, not knowing how to help her poor favourite, and dreading to tell any one of his state, lest she should hear it said that he was very seriously ill. But it did not need for Janet to tell such bad news—the servants soon made the discovery for themselves; and then it was of course communicated to Mrs. Tamplin and to Tom, the latter being as sorry as any one to learn that the evil he had so carelessly and teasingly prophesied, was really likely to happen.

Poor Prince Charlie! from being the entertainment he had soon become the concern and anxiety of all in the house, and it was very melancholy and touching, when, in his desire to divert the company collected round his cage, he, for a moment, forgot his ailments, spread his wings for their admiration, and roused up to call himself "poor" and "pretty," but in a weak pitiful voice that brought tears to Janet's eyes.

"Mamma, perhaps something he ate last night has made him ill," suggested Janet, hoping that if Prince Charlie were only suffering from a fit of indigestion he might soon be well again.

"No, I fear it isn't that," said Mrs. Tamplin; "Tom, I think, was right about the sneezing last

night; the poor thing has a severe cold; do you hear the wheezing noise when it breathes?"

"The wonder is how he's took his cold!" put in cook; "the kitchen here, where he's been all night, was quite warm when I opened the door this morning, and his cage has been covered over too to keep out the cold."

"I should be afraid he caught cold coming here," said Mrs. Tamplin; "had he any covering over the cage then?" and she looked at the maids for an answer.

"Miss must have answered the door herself," said one of them, "for none of us knew the bird had come till we saw him in Miss Janet's hands.

"There wasn't anything over the cage, mamma," said Janet, who looked now paler than ever, and was trembling so, she was obliged to sit down.

"Then Prince Charlie's state is easily accounted for," said Mrs. Tamplin; "yesterday was very raw, and the drizzling rain that came on in the afternoon was quite sufficient to give him his death of cold. I wonder Mrs. Jedson should be so careless of a valuable bird such as this, and poor Ruth's pet, too! It could not have been through ignorance, for Ruth would be sure to leave her every proper direction about the care of his health."

"Well, it's some satisfaction to think the pretty dear ain't been harmed in this house, and that none here has got to accuse themselves of cruelty to a poor thing that can't speak only what it's been taught," said cook, in the good-natured wish to soothe her little mistress's feelings, though, *from* the increased misery of Janet's looks, it

seemed she had only been successful in harrowing them.

"The worst of it is, we none of us know anything about birds, or how to doctor them," admitted Tom, who the evening before had pretended to be so knowing on the subject.

"And a bird's such an awkward thing to nurse," observed cook; "you can't wrap it up in flannel, or anything, as we did missus's little dog, when it had the asthma."

"All *we* can do is to keep him warm by the fireside; but possibly Mrs. Willoughby might suggest something more for his cure. I will write a little note to her, asking her either to come or to send us her advice," said Mrs. Tamplin.

Janet brightened up at this. Mrs. Willoughby had birds of all sorts, and was reputed very skilful in their management; it was most likely she would be able to benefit Prince Charlie. It was very kind of her to come as she did, so soon after the receipt of Mrs. Tamplin's note; but, alas! after careful examination of him, she could say little to raise Janet's hopes respecting her drooping pet. Mrs. Willoughby's opinion was simply this: if Prince Charlie were now at the climax of his disorder, he had a fair chance of getting better; but should the bad symptoms increase instead of lessen, his mistress must make up her mind to lose him. Janet did not say anything when Mrs. Willoughby thus expressed herself; but, oh! she did so hope and trust Prince Charlie would not get any worse.

As soon as the morning-room was considered warm enough, Prince Charlie's cage was thither removed from the kitchen, and there sat Janet,

hour by hour, all day long, scarcely taking her eyes from the bird, calling him all the fond names she could think of, pitying him in her gentlest tones, and now and then trying to tempt him to eat little morsels of things he liked, to enable her to cherish the hope that he was better rather than worse. Only yesterday, Janet, in that same room, had stood at the window, irritably impatient for Prince Charlie's arrival, and now what would she not give to know him safe at Mrs. Jedson's still, instead of the miserable, suffering object he had become, through his journey in the cold!

And now, notwithstanding all the care bestowed upon him, Prince Charlie grew worse and worse. Janet, having been constantly with him, did not so much remark the change in him from the morning; but her papa coming in to see him, just about Janet's bed-time, was so shocked at his deplorable condition, and the sad alteration a few hours had made in him, that he thought it would only be mercy to put him out of his misery, and cruelty to let his sufferings be further prolonged.

Janet, with a burst of grief, begged that her poor cockatoo might not be killed. "Oh, papa! oh, mamma! do let him live as long as he can. Oh, it isn't cruel! do let him live!" petitioned she, sobs breaking her voice, and tears running from the eyes she raised imploringly to theirs.

"Hush, Janet! don't cry, my child," said her papa, kissing her wet, pale cheek, "Prince Charlie shall not be killed, if the thought of it distresses you so. It was partly for your sake, as well as for the poor bird's, that I wished such a thing. Poor Prince Charlie would certainly be better off *dead,* than scarce able to breathe, as he is now;

and I am fearing a continuation of this painful excitement may make my little girl ill. She has not been much used to anxiety and trouble;" and Mr. Tamplin smoothed Janet's hair caressingly.

"Oh! never mind me, dear papa; you are too kind to me; I deserve——" began Janet, and then left off abruptly.

"But I must mind to take care of my little daughter, more precious to me than hundreds of cockatoos, Janet; and so, now, in return for my promise to you that Prince Charlie shall live as long as nature will let him, you must go to bed, and try to sleep till morning."

In vain Janet protested against going to bed, and declared she should be far too anxious to sleep; her mamma and papa both insisted upon her, at all events, trying to rest. They were very uneasy about her, as she had eaten nothing all day, and was looking like a little ghost.

At night, as it had been promised Janet, the cockatoo was placed in a warm corner of the kitchen; a good fire, backed by cinders, that would last out a long time, left for him; his cage covered against draughts; and food and the water that he was now obliged to have on account of his feverish thirst, placed beside him. These arrangements made, the very last thing, almost at midnight, it was not thought necessary that any one should sit up with the invalid bird, as, were he surrounded by friends the whole night through, nothing more could possibly be done for his comfort. Yet, notwithstanding their being persuaded of this, it was with rather uncomfortable sensations, and something like a feeling of compunction, that the servants, and Mr. and Mrs. Tamplin even,

before going to bed, looked their last at poor Prince Charlie; for though they reasoned against such an idea, it did seem like hard-heartedness to leave the poor thing to die in loneliness, and all were glad to go to sleep to forget this, and the other troubles of the day. Mrs. Tamplin was, most especially, and was not pleased to be awakened out of a pleasant dream, and two hours before her usual time of getting up, by some loud knocks at her door.

"Who is it?" she asked, from her pillow.

"It's me, mum," answered the kitchen-maid's voice; "Miss Janet ain't well, and cook thinks you'd better come."

Almost before this speech was finished, Mrs. Tamplin had opened her door, and, in her dressing-gown, was looking at the maid with a face of anxious alarm.

"Please, mum, it's give me such a turn; but when I went to open the kitchen shutters this morning, the first thing I saw was little Miss lying dead-like on the floor; but it's only a faint, cook says."

"Where is she?" gasped Mrs. Tamplin.

"Miss Janet's on her own bed, mum; cook carried her up, and says she'll soon be better," added the kitchen-maid, by way of consolation, as the mother hurried off to her child.

It seemed as though all the maid-servants in the house were assembled round their little mistress, anxiously watching the success of the restoratives cook was applying; but they directly made way for Mrs. Tamplin to approach the bed, and look upon what seemed an image in white wax of Janet, so deadly pale was the face.

"Poor tender-hearted little dear!" said cook, as she too, made way for her mistress; "after we had all gone to bed, she must have comed down to the kitchen, and there she's set an' watched by her bird, an' kep up the fire all night, an' had no light but that, an' this morning Sally found her in a faint on the floor, an' the bird dead. Lor! if I'd only known what was in her head, I'd have set up with pleasure, rather than Missy should!"

"She's better now, and will soon be well," said Mrs. Tamplin, answering the anxious looks of her husband, who, dressing hurriedly, had followed her.

But Mrs. Tamplin was too hopeful. Janet recovered from one fainting fit only to fall into another. A doctor was fetched, who pronounced her to be seriously ill, and ordered her to be instantly put to bed.

"Ah! if she could only look upon us with her pretty eyes to know us," sighed faithful cook, who would share in the nursing.

But alas! many weary, anxious days passed before Janet recognized her own mamma, and became sensible that it was she who night and day so tenderly watched and nursed her. During her delirium she was always calling for "Mamma," and talking wildly about wanting her forgiveness for something unconfessed.

"It's on her mind, poor dear, that she went downstairs that *mis'rable* night, and set up with the cockatoo," said cook, and Mrs. Tamplin agreed with her, or that it was simply fancy, for she knew of nothing else that could trouble Janet's conscience.

But at last Janet's fever abated, and the little maid, the shadow of her former self, was restored to consciousness. She was very weak, and still required the greatest care; but the worst anxiety was over about her, and her mamma could now afford herself sleep, and the maids sang their songs, so long hushed in the fears that the little life upstairs might go out at any moment.

Peevishness is always allowed in a convalescent; in fact, crossness is hailed as a favourable symptom. People are decidedly getting better so soon as they begin to fret and grumble. But Janet was not cross, nor did she give herself airs as she began to improve. Never had she been so meek and docile in her life as now, and all who waited on her were touched by her patience and sweetness of behaviour. The little skeleton hand was stretched out to take all that was offered, the thin face brightened in thankfulness for every kind look, the large eyes closed when bid to sleep, and the poor appetite exerted itself to do all required of it, so that the nourishment ordered was swallowed if not relished.

As yet the cause of Janet's illness had not been talked of in her hearing. But one day, her mamma, believing Janet was asleep, gave the history of Prince Charlie to a lady who had come up to see the invalid, and of course it was told how feeling Janet had shown herself, and how devoted her conduct to the poor bird had been. The lady seemed much interested, and could hardly say enough in praise of Janet's "extreme tenderness of disposition, charming *sensibility*," *etc.*

"Mamma," called Janet from her bed, as soon as the lady had gone, "mamma, may I talk? I feel stronger to-day, and I do so want to tell you something."

"Well, darling, I suppose you needn't continue quite a dumb girl any longer," said her mamma, smiling down upon the little thin face that was very earnest just now; "I must praise you, Janet," continued Mrs. Tamplin, "for having been so good about not speaking, in that, as in everything else, you have done just as you were told."

"Mamma, I've something to confess that you don't know of," said Janet, as if she had not heeded the praise bestowed upon her.

"Yes I do know of it, Janet," said Mrs. Tamplin, soothingly, "I know that you came downstairs that sad night, and, against my wishes, sat up with the poor bird. It was wrong, Janet, but you were in such sorrow and anxiety as hardly to know it was wrong; and your illness has been punishment enough, so that I quite forgive you, dear," and Mrs. Tamplin bent down to kiss her.

"It isn't that," said Janet, mournfully; "that was bad enough, but I've something much worse to confess."

Mrs. Tamplin gazed in anxiety at her little daughter, for she began to fear her mind was wandering again. But, no; Janet's face, though very sorrowful, had no wildness of fever about it.

"Perhaps you had better tell me another time, Janet; you are not strong enough yet to bear any sort of agitation."

"It won't hurt me to tell you half so much as to keep it secret longer," said Janet, eagerly; "now I am able to think, I can't rest till you know all."

"Then tell it me, Janet," said Mrs. Tamplin, sitting down by the bed; and Janet, in a low, sad tone, began her confession:—

"When I was so impatient about poor Prince Charlie's coming, mamma, you remember I asked you if it would not be better to fetch him, than wait for Mrs. Jedson to send him, and you gave me good reasons for not fetching him, and told me I must have patience to wait for his being sent. But I didn't wait; oh! how I wish I had! I thought you were wrong, and that I knew best, so as soon as you were in the carriage, without anybody's knowing it, I set off to fetch my cockatoo. I was a long time getting to Mrs. Jedson's, for I didn't know the way, and when I asked it, people told me so many turnings at once that I was puzzled and went wrong. When at last I found the house, Mrs. Jedson had gone out, and there was only an old woman in it—a lodger, I think, who was very suspicious, and would hardly be persuaded the bird was mine, and let me have it. I was afraid she might take me for a thief, and send for a policeman, so I was very glad to take the cage and get away from her, and never thought of the wind's being too cold for Prince Charlie, though I believe now Mrs. Jedson only kept him at her house because it wasn't the kind of day to let the poor thing go out, and if I had waited to see her, would have covered the cage up for him. It's a large cage, you know, *mamma*, and I was soon so tired I had to get a

street boy to carry it, and then all his companions, great big boys, came round us talking to the cockatoo, and hindering and annoying me so, I thought I should never get home. And then that nasty rain came on, and you can't think, dear mamma, what a wretched walk home it was, and how sorry I was I had ever thought of disobeying you! But the worst was my hiding my disobedience from you, and letting you believe Mrs. Jedson had sent the bird! Oh, mamma! if God will help me, I don't think I shall ever deceive you again, for I haven't been happy a moment since. Not even Prince Charlie, had he lived, could have been much pleasure to me while I was still doing wrong. But when he was so ill, and I knew I had made him so, I was dreadfully wretched, and it was not that I was tender-hearted, as the lady said—I have no right to be thought that—but because my conscience was bad, that I watched him, and grieved so about him. I felt that if it had not been for my naughty impatience, he would be well and happy as when I fetched him from Mrs. Jedson's; and then, mamma, I could not ask *his* forgiveness, and tell him how sorry I was; that seemed my worst grief."

"And is it only since your illness that you have determined to tell me all this, Janet?" inquired Mrs. Tamplin.

"No, mamma, I was going to tell it you the morning I was taken ill. The night I sat up in the kitchen I was frightened to be alone, naughty as I was, and I couldn't pray until I was willing to do right; that is, willing to tell you everything, and ask your forgiveness. Can you forgive me, mamma?" asked Janet, earnestly.

"Yes, my dear child, I can and do forgive you most heartily, for I believe you are truly sorry for what you have done wrong. You show that you are so, by the pains you take to amend. I have been noticing that, since your illness, and even in your state of weakness, you have struggled hard against the wilfulness and impatience natural to you, and have tried your best to be docile and submissive. This looks like repentance, Janet, repentance whereby we forsake sin."

"I pray to be saved from doing anything the least shade wrong," said Janet, "for I have found out that what seem but little faults lead on to great sins. If I hadn't given way to impatience, but had occupied myself in work or reading, as you advised, I might not have been tempted to disobedience and deceit; poor Prince Charlie might still be alive, and I his happy mistress," sighed Janet.

"If my little daughter remembers this lesson, and tries to act upon it," said Mrs. Tamplin, "she will have cause to be thankful for, rather than to lament, even the sad consequences of her impatience."

THE COWSLIP-PICKING.

WE could help Susan, mamma. We should so like being all day in a cowslip field! cried Charlotte and Emily Willis.

They, with their mamma, were in Susan Holt's cottage kitchen, and Susan had just been telling them that excepting little Janey, her niece, she would this year have no one to help her to get cowslip-pips for her wine. Mrs. Smithers' father was too ill to be left; Ann Meadows was in regular work, and no holiday could be had for her; Polly Saddler was, for the present, up at Mouldchase; and Hayward's lad, though with leisure to be at anybody's service, had such cow and donkey-worrying, and such hockey-stick-cutting propensities, that Susan was afraid of having anything to do with such a "rampageous" boy.

"Yes, picking cowslips would be delightful pastime enough for you," said Mrs. Willis, in answer to her daughters; "but would Susan care to have such helpers? Would you not be in the way, rather than of use to her?"

Charlotte and Emily were indignant. Was not Janey going to help, and was it not likely so small a child as she would be much more in Susan's way, and of much less assistance to her, than their head-taller selves!

"What does Susan say?" asked Mrs. Willis.

Susan was afraid the young ladies would not like cowslip-picking as a business, and that they would tire of it long before the day was out.

Charlotte and Emily declared they should not tire of it. They could pick cowslips for a week, and still think it play.

Susan shook her head, but the little girls looked at her so beseechingly that, out of consideration for them, she accepted their offer of help, and asked their mamma to let them join in the cowslip-picking.

It was then arranged that if the following Wednesday morning gave promise of a fine day, Charlotte and Emily, after an early substantial breakfast, should join Susan at her cottage, and with her and Janey proceed to some special cowslip meads situate a mile and a half further on.

This matter settled, and also the laundry business, the occasion of Mrs. Willis's visit to the cottage, that lady and her daughters took their leave of Susan and Janey, and went home.

Susan Holt had lived with Mrs. Willis as nurse, and had married from her place about four years before the time of this story. She had not long enjoyed the happiness of a home of her own, when her husband underwent a long illness, which *so weakened* his constitution that he could not

work hard and continuously as before, but was often laid up, and was a charge rather than a help to his affectionate wife, upon whom now devolved the duty of earning money for their support.

It was fortunate that Susan was a clever helpful person, and could turn her hand to many things besides laundry work, which does not pay well in a little country village such as Susan lived in. One of these things was the making of a very superior sort of cowslip wine; and Mrs. Miller, having kindly set her up with a cask and some bottles, Susan every year made a nice little sum by her wine trade. Hitherto one or other of her neighbours had helped her to harvest for it, but this year, as we have seen, until the Miss Willises volunteered their services, she had only her little niece Janey to depend upon for assistance in cowslip-picking.

Janey's home was in London, and she had only come to stay with Susan just while Mr. Holt was having one of his bad attacks, that she might be a little handmaid to him while Susan was out at work. Mr. Holt was now better, but Susan had found Janey so useful and so lovable that she did not like parting with her, and was in no hurry to send her back to her London home, and her task there of nursing back-breaking baby-brother Tommy. Janey was very happy to be with Aunt Sukey. She liked fields ever so much better than streets, and blue sky better than smoke and fog, but she *would* like to see her mother again—and who could be taking care of Tommy all this time —and had he another tooth through?

The Miss Willises had thought that a child so small and insignificant-looking as Janey must

necessarily be more of a charge and less of a help than themselves. But Susan, as, after the departure of her visitors, she for a moment watched Janey's thin little fingers in patient travel on to the end of a long seam, sighed a hopeless wish that in the cowslip-picking, Miss Charlotte and Miss Emily might show themselves as useful, as unselfish, and as little troublesome as the small child they were so ready to despise.

Not but what Susan was fond of her old nurslings, and glad to have them spend a day with her. But then that day must be a holiday, and she must be at liberty to take them for one of their long favourite walks. It was pleasant enough to witness their delight in the wildness of the woods, to hear their merry shouts when lighting on some new flower, and to have them at her side all excitement as to whether her long arms, even, could reach high enough to gather the woodbine so splendidly fine at the top of the hedge. But at happy times such as these, Miss Charlotte and Miss Emily showed themselves selfish and disobliging, disposed to quarrel together, and to be tiresomely mischievous; and Susan could not but fear they would prove sad hinderers instead of helpers in the business of cowslip-picking.

Meanwhile Charlotte and Emily felt very happy and very important. They had often picked cowslips for such childish purposes as making tea, and threading into balls with which to decorate the summer-house; but to be cowslip-pickers for business ends, and to be Susan's only helpers (for Janey was nobody) were privileges of usefulness of which any little girls might well feel proud.

That same morning, a lady called to invite

them to spend Wednesday with her; but their mamma informing her of their engagement for that day, the lady, after kindly inviting them for Thursday instead, turned to Charlotte and Emily, and said—"How very kind of you to offer to pick cowslips for your old nurse! How glad she will be to have active little feet and busy little hands like yours at her service."

Charlotte and Emily looked as if they felt they deserved the lady's praise, and knew themselves to be Susan's benefactors.

Then, in the evening, Mr. Willis, who made great pets of his little daughters, said, with pretended gravity, that he should expect to have applications for their services from his farmer neighbours as soon as it was known how extensively they had helped Susan. Charlotte and Emily smiled smiles of great self-satisfaction.

"A fine lot of cowslips you'll pick!" said their brother Austin, contemptuously, when the next morning Charlotte and Emily were boasting to him of the baskets and baskets full of cowslip-pips they meant to pick. "Susan is very kind to be bothered with you; she knows well enough the kind of help you'll be. If I were she, I'd have nothing to do with you."

"We shouldn't offer to help *you*, Austin," said Emily.

"I know you wouldn't," said Austin; "you're not good-natured enough for that."

"Yes, we are good-natured," returned Charlotte. "Papa says we are, and Mrs. Maddon thinks so too."

"Oh, yes, just because you've offered to pick cowslips for Susan, but they don't know that you

wouldn't run down to pick up little Charlie's ball when he let it fall out of the nursery window," said Austin.

"Nurse could have fetched it herself," said Emily; "I hate running up and down stairs, it makes me so hot."

"I daresay nurse dislikes it as much as you do, and, besides, now she is getting old it is not good for her to run about."

"Well, I'm good-natured if Charlotte isn't," cried Emily, "for only this morning I held Miss Astley's basket for her all the time she was filling it with flowers for the vases."

"Yes, you ill-natured thing," cried Charlotte, crossly, "I wanted to help Miss Astley, and had the basket first, but you were mean enough to get hold of it from the summer-house, where I had just put it down for a moment."

"A pretty sort of good-nature this, Emily!" said Austin. "I should have called it selfishness had you left me to name it."

But Austin spoke in vain. Charlotte and Emily were not to be convinced that they were not two very kind, unselfish little girls, and that their services would not be very valuable to Susan; so, on Wednesday morning, a fine sunny one, after breakfasting, and being hatted and tippeted, they set off on the mile and a half walk to Susan's cottage, escorted by a servant carrying a large basket over-filled by a plum-cake and a bottle of milk. They found Susan and little Janey with their bonnets on, ready to start; so the whole party were soon off, Susan in possession of the lunch-basket and a measure, Janey laden with *two baskets* which, though light, were awkward,

on account of their size, for so small a person to manage."

"Let me carry the cake-basket, Susan; look, I've only this small one of mine," said Charlotte.

"No, let me carry it," cried Emily, "Charlotte is not to be of more help than I."

"My dear young ladies, you don't know what you're asking for," said Susan; "you've no idea of the weight of this basket; you'd soon be ready to put it down if you had it to carry."

"Then let me carry the measure," said Emily.

"No, my dear, I can carry the measure," returned Susan; "but if you and Miss Charlotte like to help carry, you might free Janey from one of her baskets."

Both of Janey's baskets were instantly, and rather roughly, snatched from her by Charlotte and Emily, and the poor little child made of no use. But presently, when they were about a fourth of the way down the long lane leading to the cowslip mead, Emily, examining the banks, espied a bunch of primroses of such unusual size and such clear bright tint, that she determined to have the root for her garden.

"It *is* a beautiful primrose; I never saw one so fine; I wish I could find another like it," said Charlotte, when Emily had called her attention to the prize.

"You won't find another like this," said Emily. "Please dig it up for me, Susan."

"Oh, my dear Miss Emily, don't let us stop now, it will hinder so," said Susan. "I'll get it for you as we come back."

"Some one may have taken it then, or we may not remember where it is," objected Emily.

"It isn't likely any one will take it; there's few comes along this lane; and as it grows just alongside of this knobby tree with the ivy over it, there's no danger of our mistaking the place," said Susan.

But Emily began to whimper, and declared she must have the primrose now.

"But what am I to get it up with, Miss Emily?" said Susan, who had only just thought of this difficulty.

"It must be got up, I want it," said Emily.

Susan was much perplexed, and thought there would be no end to the delay, when suddenly it occurred to her that the knife they had with them for cutting the cake would do, and could be afterwards dusted and made fit for its proper service. Would Miss Emily mind its being used? So long as her primrose could be got up, Emily cared not what implement was used for it. Charlotte's consent was not asked; she was at some little distance, and very busy picking violets. So Susan, using the cake knife, soon got the primrose out of the ground, with a ball of earth round the roots to keep the plant fresh till evening. Charlotte was then summoned from the violet bank, Janey took up the two large baskets of which the sisters were now tired, and the party continued their walk along the lane.

Arrived at the cowslip mead, the young ladies' first care was to find places of safety for their treasures—viz., the violets and the primrose root. These safe in a shady nook, Charlotte proposed that herself and Emily should try which could first fill her little basket with cowslip-pips, the baskets *being of the* same size.

"Let us begin together then," said Emily. "You must wait till I say *three*—ONE, TWO, THREE."

Emily picked away without looking at her sister, but Charlotte every now and then could not help a glance at Emily's basket, which, as its owner gave undivided attention to her work, filled first.

"Baskets are such nasty things to pick into; I shall put mine away," said Charlotte, mortified that she had not worked so fast as Emily.

"Baskets are the proper things to pick into; we brought ours on purpose," said Emily.

"I don't care; I shan't pick into mine; I shall get the cup we brought for our milk."

"That you shan't, Charlotte, for you'll make it dirty, and it can't be washed here."

But Charlotte determined she would have the cup, and went to fetch it, while Emily ran to Susan to beg her not to let the cup be used.

"The cowslips won't hurt the cup, Miss Emily," said Susan, soothingly.

"I can't drink out of it if she has it," said Emily, beginning to cry.

"But you didn't mind my digging up the primrose with the cake knife," remonstrated Susan.

"That's a knife and this is a cup," said Emily.

"You know there's no sense in such a reason as that," said poor Susan, and added, sighing, "I'm afraid the real reason is, that the knife was used for your pleasure, and the cup is for Miss Charlotte's."

Emily did not answer to this, but went on

crying; so Susan persuaded Charlotte, the less obstinate of the two, to put the cup back into the basket, and to pick with her into the measure.

This pacified Emily, but she was already tired of work, and not being able to race with her sister in basket-filling, she began to talk to Janey, and let her fingers be idle.

"What do you do when you're at home?" asked the young lady.

"I nusses Tommy," said little Janey.

"Is Tommy your pussy?"

"He ain't no cat, our Tommy ain't—he's our baby!" said Janey, surprised that Emily should imagine anything so strange as that their Tommy was a cat.

"Are you always nursing Tommy? Don't you play sometimes?"

"Oh, yes, I plays of a evening, when Tommy's a-bed."

"But wouldn't you like to play all day? Have holidays, I mean, like Charlotte and I have."

"Yes, that I should," says Janey. "I often want to play, and Sally Johnson, too, comes calling for me, and shows me how she's a-playing at shuttlecock; but I goes on nussing Tommy; I knows it wouldn't be right to go to play, and not help mother all I can."

Emily had a baby brother, and liked nursing him when in the humour for it, and with nothing better to do, but to have to nurse him all day long, and to play only after he was in bed was quite a different matter. Emily could not help wondering at Janey's goodness and unselfishness. She continued questioning the little maid, and learnt all *about* Tommy, what "a little pretty dear" he was.

the number of teeth he had, and the notice he took of things, for Janey talked about him like a devoted little mother.

All this time Emily sat on the grass doing nothing, while Janey's nimble fingers were making a space round them bare of cowslips. "Oh, we're to have lunch now, I'm so glad!" cried Emily, starting up, as Susan and Charlotte approached, the former carrying the basket of provisions. There were first some sandwiches to be eaten, and then Susan cut slices for all from the beautiful plumcake. Great was Janey's relish for the cake! She had before only seen such in the pastrycook's windows; she now had the treat of tasting it for the first time. Emily ate very heartily, and no sooner was lunch over than she declared herself too tired to walk about, and that she must rest a little while, though she should not go to sleep.

"How lazy you are!" cried Charlotte, "you've scarcely picked a cowslip all the morning, and now you want to rest. As for me, I mean to be very active. I shall climb the stile and look out for cowslips in the next field."

"Go anywhere so that you don't come talking here," said Emily, who lay her length on the warm grass, and whose eyes were shut as if she did, instead of didn't, mean to go to sleep.

"Good-night, Miss Slothful," said Charlotte, moving off to where Susan was, that she might tell her she was intending to wander into the next field.

"Oh, don't go off away from me; oh, pray don't, Miss," entreated Susan. "This field always was the best for cowslips—you won't find half so many in the next, and them land-springs there are

so deceiving; and besides I shall worry so about you if I can't see where you are, and know what you're doing."

Charlotte protested that she could take care of herself, and would be quite safe; and notwithstanding Susan's dissuasion, ran off to the stile and was soon over it.

"Oh, dear! Aunt Sukey, we must work fast! Lookie here, there's ony them of cowslips," and Janey showed the small contents of the largest basket, into which had been put the united gettings of the party.

"You and I can pick enough by evening time, if we can only go on; but arn't you almost tired, dear!" and Aunt Sukey looked kindly at the small child, who had all the morning long worked on steadily and patiently.

"No, I don't think I shall get tired, it's so nice being out here in the fields."

It was nice, as Janey said. The spring sun made it pleasantly warm, they were treading on soft grass, cowslip-sprinkled, and country sounds, the twittering of birds from the copse beyond, the lowings of cows from the farm to which the mead belonged, lent enchantment by their distance, and fell soothingly upon the ear. Susan and Janey were listening to these, working on in silence, when presently the latter screamed out, "Oh!" and Susan, looking up, saw that Miss Charlotte had come upon them without their being aware of her approach.

"Dear me, Miss, how you do startle one!" cried Susan, and then added in some alarm, "but what's the matter that you look so serious?"

"It seemed all nice green grass," said Char-

lotte, hesitatingly, and by her looks directing Susan's attention to feet and ankles thickly coated with slimy mud, "and when I went to walk on it it was all sloshy, and it's made me like this!"

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said Janey, "I never see nothing like Miss's feet! They are in a mess!"

Susan, too, made her exclamations, but exclamations won't clean shoes or dry stockings, and as Susan feared Charlotte might take cold wet-footed, there was no help for it but to set off home; that is, to Susan's home. Emily, who was fast asleep, was awakened to be told this, and was very vexed and cross about it.

"It's just like Charlotte," she said; "she's always careless and silly. Once when we went fishing with Austin, she would carry the basket that had our gooseberry pie in it at the end of our fishing-rod, so that it slipped off into the stream as we walked by its side. Austin did get it out again and dried it in the sun, but the sugar was all washed away, and the pie was very nasty when it would have been so nice if it hadn't been in the water."

"Has Miss left the basket over in t'other field?" asked Janey.

"Oh yes! how stupid of me! I quite forgot it," said Charlotte. "It's—stay—I don't exactly know where it is, but you'll see it if you look about the field."

Janey went off after the basket, while Susan and the young ladies began their walk to the cottage. They were about half-way down the lane, and had not yet been rejoined by Janey when they met Austin.

"What, finished picking and going home again!" cried he, in disappointed tones; "papa has given me a half-holiday on purpose to help Susan."

Emily was eager to inform him that they had not finished the cowslip-picking, but that Charlotte had been careless enough to get into a swamp, and that in consequence of her feet being wet they were all obliged to come home.

Austin did not stay to talk about the accident, but asked Susan to let him have the large baskets and he would work hard to fill it for her before evening. "All that you've picked can go into the measure," said he.

"It's very kind of you, Master Austin," said Susan, "and I shall be glad enough of your help, but you needn't have this basket, for Janey's been left behind in the meads to look for one as big that Miss Charlotte mislaid."

"All right," said Austin, and off he went.

Charlotte and Emily were beginning to feel rather ashamed of themselves, and walked quietly by Susan's side, thinking rather dismally of what account they must give at home of the cowslip-picking.

"I wish I had worked as hard as Janey has," thought Emily.

"I wish I hadn't gone into the next field, instead of keeping with Susan," thought Charlotte, and she was yet more sorry for her wilfulness when Susan would insist upon washing out the muddy stockings and polishing the dirty boots.

"Oh, Susan, do let me go home as I am," said she; "I have been trouble enough already."

But Susan would not hear of such a thing, she *first made* Charlotte put on a pair of large stock-

ings, and cradle her little feet in what seemed giantess' slippers, then she lighted a brisk little fire, put the shoes to dry, and water on to heat for the stocking-wash.

"It will take a long time for Charlotte's stockings to dry; mightn't I go back to the cowslip-field; Janey is staying to help Austin, and I could help too," said Emily.

But Susan was afraid of more mischief happening did she trust Emily out of her sight; so she could not agree to this plan.

Emily was beginning to be fretful and to want to have her own way, when Charlotte reminded her that all the vexations of the day had been caused by their wilfulness, and that if they wished to benefit Susan they had better submit to her judgment.

Emily then resigned herself to wait, though it did seem a very long time before the stockings were dry enough to put on.

"Now I'd best be taking you home," said Susan, "it's nigh the time your mamma will expect you."

"Couldn't you be saved the walk, Susan?" asked Charlotte. "Austin will surely be here soon, and mamma always trusts us with him. We will be good and quiet till he comes," added she, humbly.

Susan was pleased that Charlotte showed herself so thoughtful, and consented that the sisters should stay for their brother.

"Here they come," cried Emily, who had been standing at the doorway, and had just caught sight of Austin and Janey as they turned a corner in the lane.

"The basket's quite full," said Charlotte, who immediately ran out to look, and perceived that it would not shut, it was so heaped with the pretty cowslip flowers.

"And Janey's pinafore is full too," said Emily, who noticed that the little girl had made a bag of it.

"I ain't got no cowslips, on'y big Miss's violets and littler Miss's primrose," explained Janey.

How kind of Janey to think of their flowers and bring them home with such care! thought the little Willises.

And here ends the cowslip-picking; only I must add the lesson that Charlotte and Emily learnt from their sad failure in being useful to poor Susan. They found out that real good-nature can only proceed from unselfishness, and that unselfishness must be learnt and practised at home, in acts of kindness and goodwill to parents, brothers, and sisters, servants, and those immediately around us, before we can hope to benefit and assist by it those further off. There is a kind of good-nature that is like poor Charlotte's soft green grass, it shows itself only to hide a swamp of selfishness that lies beneath.

THE STORY OF A LEAF.

STOP, sir! I am sorry, very sorry, but cannot indeed receive you on so familiar a footing, cried out an autumnal leaf, to a toad just about to step upon her, as, glued to the mud, she lay in the middle of the lane.

The toad retired a step—a look of surprise in his mild, philanthropic eye—and very respectfully made offers of service to a lady of such more than wormlike sensitiveness that she turned before being trodden on.

Now Mrs. Leaf had had a fall; she had, in fact, very much come down in the world, or she might have scorned offers of service from a reptile. But misfortunes humble us, especially such as bring dirt upon us, and Mrs. Leaf, fast stuck in the mire, was not in a position to turn away from a helping hand, even though a clammy one; so she availed herself of Mr. Toad's assistance, as readily and graciously as in more flourishing times she had met offers of protection from fine feathered bird-knights against invading caterpillars. The toad

gently and carefully, began to detach her sear and yellow leafship from the clayey mud, and would have done it without the least fracture of her fibre, if she hadn't been an old fidget, and worried him with "Oh dear's!" "Take care's!" and "Oh's!" and "Ah's!" till he got nervous and awkward, and gave a wrench that quieted her till she found herself safe in the shelter of the wayside grass.

"It was just the most miserable place I could have fallen upon," said the leaf, as, having thanked her rescuer, she looked at the mud in the lane.

The toad mildly observed that it might have happened worse, and mud was at all events *softening*, to a fall.

"But, you must allow, that for me it's a wretched day to come down in," said the leaf, pursuing her grumbling.

"I don't know, ma'am, perhaps a dash of rain in your face may have saved your being hysterical after the flutter of your fall," said the toad, who was no croaker, and, considering that he lived much in the dark, had very bright ideas.

"Ah! you're one of the put-up-with-anything and believe-all's-for-the-best sort. I daresay you're contented to be a toad," said the leaf, sneeringly.

This was being personal, offensively so. Surprised at her ill temper, the toad could only suppose that her leafship was ruffled because he presumed to stay longer than he was wanted, so, being a proud sort of fellow in his way, he pleaded business, made a bow, and strode off home to his bonny marsh.

No sooner was he gone than Mrs. Leaf felt

sorry for her ungracious words, but her repentance came too late, so, sighing the matter off her mind, she turned to examine her new friends, tall, slender creatures in dresses of soft chaste green.

These were the grass-maidens, sisters of mercy, who asylum sick and wounded insects, and give shelter to many a dying leaf from hurry-scurrying winds. They are voiceless, but yet not dumb, for their presence is gracious and soothing, their every wave tells of sympathy, and they are clad in the hue of faith and hope. They cannot promise or profess, yet the silence of sincerity wins them trust and love more than if, silver-tongued, they discoursed of charity day and night.

The leaf experienced this, and it relieved her mind from the distressing fear that her last friend had left her when Mr. Toad so hurriedly took his departure.

Happy was it for her, in her hour of decay, to be looked down upon by such sweet pitying faces, to be touched by such gentle hands, and to have the best of listeners, silent ones! for a long story she had to tell.

Leaves do not make wills, but not one of them passes out of life without leaving the world its story with the lesson thereof, and this they do not always like telling, excepting to the winds;—at least our leaf did not; so, with just a small prelude of apology, she unbosomed herself to the grass-maidens as follows:—

We were daughters of the forest king, so I and my sisters were not suffered to unfurl till the birds were well practised in song, till day was much longer than night, and till king sun had

mastered rebellious frost, snow, and wind, and was preparing the earth by spring-tide for his full summer reign.

You will wish to know what I thought of the world when it first opened upon me, or rather when I first opened upon it. But I didn't think of it, or of anything. I only felt—felt myself a happy, merry little thing, that couldn't flutter and dance enough to wear out its joy.

This was while I was a leaflet, but as I grew up, I felt a desire come upon me to look about me and notice all I could in the world. Then I began to think of how large it was, how many things were in it, how deep the sky, how glorious the sun, how numberless the stars. Yes, night by night I tried to count these last, and could not; as day by day I had tried to number my sisters, and also could not. The flowers at even close in sleep, but there is no sleep for us; we are born watchers like the stars, and are all our days restless as the winds.

And now I began to watch for the birds to come and chirp interestingly to us of foreign countries, and of strange cousins of ours in distant forests. These, and the cockchafers (whom we didn't like) were our only visitors of note, but sometimes a bee of inquiring mind would hum up to us, thinking himself a skylark for his feat, and sometimes a butterfly, all palpitation, would glance into our sober shade, as if she were some worldling giving a peep of curiosity into a convent. We were very glad to see the back of her wings, for we didn't want a brood of horrid caterpillars about us, excepting for our dear birds to feed on.

Our sire was a noble old oak that, with some

other fine trees, had been spared in a forest clearing, and now gave park-like grace to grass meadows that gleamed white and gold with daisies and buttercups. We stood on rising ground and could see eastward to the horizon, and watch the morning change her robes of light, from grey to amber, and from amber to diamond white. To the west, and only a few yards off, ran a small brooklet with water-lilies, calm and cool, floating on it, and bright flowers bending down to look into it. Then beyond were the woods above which, at evening, we and the birds saw skies of rose, violet, and amber, and the sunbeams gathering up into a golden fan.

The nights were as pleasant as the days, for after dancing many hours, not to speak of the rough games we were driven into by the winds, it was rest as good as sleep to look up into the moon's placid face. She seemed to me a guardian mother that had hushed earth's children to rest, and was watching over their slumbers. Then each one of the myriads of stars had a bright, kind look for me, a look for me in particular, as I could not help believing, and as I daresay all others believe who look up at them.

Our leaf duties were very simple. Only to drink in, for the general welfare of the tree, as much dew, rain, and air as we could, and then to keep shining surfaces, by brushing one another in a friendly way. The rest of our time we sang in chorus, danced till we flagged, conversed in whispers, or were silent in contemplation of the beauties and wonders about and around us.

And now I should be glad to tell you of a

dark side to all this, to tell you of dangers and discomforts of wind and weather. But you know what a beautiful time of it we have had this summer, and that in all my lifetime there has been neither frost, blight, draught, nor immoderate rain. A thunder-storm or so there was, which terrified us all, and made us huddle up together, and stick close by one another; but during these a bird sang comfortingly to us of faith and trust; and, the danger over, how purified was the air, how revived the earth, and how freshened and invigorated we ourselves!

No! I have nothing to tell that can excuse my having been a grumbler; yes, kind grass-maidens, a grumbler all through my sunny, summer days! I have told you of a fair and happy life; but I have described it as I see it, looking back upon it, not as I saw it when it was mine. I have recounted all that I might have enjoyed, but did not because I turned my back upon sun, moon, stars, soft breezes, gentle dews, glad music, loving friends, upon all that I had to delight in of good and beautiful, and was—A GRUMBLER!

And what made me a grumbler? Vanity and conceit! These make grumblers, for no one grumbles that he is not worthy of everything, but only that everything he has is unworthy of him. After I had passed my innocent leaflet stage, instead of taking heartily to my duties, and occupying my thoughts in contemplations pure and holy, I became idle, and my mind filled with ideas of self-importance. I began to esteem myself the fairest, most sprightly atom of foliage that had ever opened to the sun, to hold my *sisters in* contempt, and to fancy that I deserved a

place of distinction amongst them; in fact, that I ought to be at the very top of the tree. Now nature had not placed me at the top of the tree, but somewhere in the centre of it, and crowded up undistinguishably with my many sisters. This was the subject of my grumbling. "How bright my tint," I used to say to myself, "how glossy my surface, how symmetrical my shape! How graceful my flutterings! How silvery my voice! What credit should I be to the family could I be seen and known! Ah! were I at the top of the tree, how I should reflect the sun's rays; how largely I could drink in of dew for the benefit of us all!" Yes, it was always for the benefit of others that I desired to benefit myself. Thus, while neglecting all my duties in life, and the little offices of kindness that I might have performed for my sire and sisters, I was deceived into thinking myself their greatest benefactress, or, what was the same thing, that I should be so under circumstances of my own choosing. Oh! what a selfish creature I was! Looking back into my heart as it was then, I perceive that constant coveting so hardened it, that I could often have torn one of my poor sisters down from the top of the tree, and have remorselessly taken her place!

It was not for want of lecturing that I persisted in my covetous grumbling. My sisters lectured me on my folly in fretting and languishing after distinction beyond my reach. Some last year's leaves—brown, withered dowagers, who had braved a winter out on the tree, and been spared to benefit us young ones with their wisdom and experience—lectured me, and looked

at me witheringly. These assured me that I couldn't be better placed than I was, that the leaves at the top of the tree had by no means an enviable time of it; that they had to brave the first brunt of every danger and discomfort: that theirs was a distinction not to be coveted, but that we should look up to them lovingly and gratefully as our shelterers from the heaviest of the rain-drops, and the scorching blaze of the noonday sun. But vain the lectures of sisters and aunts; vain all lectures to me; and vain the rough shakings I got from the wind, who was irritated at my listlessness, and at not being able to stir me up to interest in anything. I would not see things as they did, but murmured that it was very hard that all the rain-drops should come to me second-hand—mere drippings, as it were, and that all my sunbeams should be intercepted, and the shadows of other leaves be ever upon me. So I fretted and pined, and pined and fretted, till I grew faded and wan, and my stem weakened, and you see the fatal consequences! Here I am in a dying state, carried off the tree the first wet autumn day! Ah! I wish, dear maidens, that I had sometimes looked down upon you; perhaps I might have profited by the silent teaching of your example of humility and contentment. I might have observed how little you troubled yourselves about getting on in the world, that you never rested from doing good to others, content to be a carpet for the solace of weary feet, rather than live uselessly. I might have noticed, too, how the cheerful buttercup brightens up at even a glimpse of sunshine, and *how your pretty companion*, the daisy, finding

herself too wee to peep over the heads of the crowd, and view the world, lifts up her sweet, innocent face to heaven instead, and lives a contented, happy little nun. Lectures, as I have told you, did me no good; indeed, I always got irritable by being talked to. You heard how cross I was to the poor toad; it was because he answered me, mildly enough I will allow, but yet he did answer. As for you—— Ah! I do, indeed, wish that I had known you earlier; that instead of looking up to covet, I had looked down to learn. My life has been a mistake—a mistake discovered too late!

The leaf stopped. Sentence by sentence her voice had become more whispering, and her aspect more languid, and now, as she lay back in the cool fanning arms of the grass maidens, I, who unnoticed, had stood in the lane, and been a watcher of the scene, perceived that both her story and her life were at an end.

Then I thought solemnly of the merciful command, "Thou shalt not covet;" that it is part of that law of which it is written, that he who keeps it not is "like the chaff, which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth," but that he who exercises himself in it day and night, "shall be like a tree planted by the waterside: that will bring forth his fruit in due season. His leaf also shall not wither, and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper."

MRS. FEATHERET'S PARTY.

THE little Croftons were dressing for it. Six of them were going—namely, Ella, aged thirteen; Julia, twelve; Harriet, ten; Sophia, seven; and the twins, Floy and Fan, just turned five.

There they were all in one large room, in which were scattered about a great many articles of dress, things that had been taken off, and things that were to be put on.

The twins were quite ready, and had on white frocks, and rose-coloured sashes and shoes. Nurse was busy finishing off Harriet, who was to wear a blue dress, and Sophia was putting on her own shoes and stockings, and doing it blindly, as her eyes were fixed on the frock destined for her—a blue one like Harriet's. Julia had been so clever as to dress herself, and plait up her own hair in a very neat fashion. Rivers, the young ladies' maid, was trying to make Ella's curls lie regularly and look smooth.

"I *must* put some pomatum on your hair, *Miss*," declared Rivers at length.

"No, I won't have my hair touched with pomatum, I hate it," said Ella.

"But your hair will look so rough, Miss! Only see the difference between yours and Miss Julia's! Please do have it pomaded, and let me plait it like Miss Julia's is done—you'd look so nice and so neat!"

"I tell you I shan't; I don't care at all about looking nice and neat," returned Ella, and then was sorry she had spoken crossly to Rivers, who was taking such pains to dress her, and was so kindly glad that she was going to a party to enjoy herself.

"There, don't mind my temper, Rivers; my hair is all right, and I'm very much obliged to you for doing it," said she, jumping up, and shaking over her shoulders a mane of ruddy brown curls the moment Rivers had put down the brush.

But Rivers was not so satisfied with the result of her hair-dressing. What a pity it was that Miss Ella didn't like pomades, and preferred curls to plaits.

"Here's Hawyet's sash," lisped Floy, glad to make herself useful.

"Where has Miss Fan gone?" asked nurse, missing her from the room.

"She's only gone into the nursery; I'll fetch her back," said Floy.

"Oh, look! look! look at her!" cried Floy, as the minute after she led in her twin sister.

Poor little Miss Fan had an unfortunate taste for mending fires, and, having found out that the nursery fire was very low, instead of calling nurse to see to it, had put coals on with her fingers,

and had then rubbed them on her pretty white frock.

Nurse and Rivers scolded the little one, and told her that they both feared she must now stay at home, and not go to the party.

"I won't do it any more, oh, not any more," said Fan, looking up into their faces sorrowfully and pleadingly.

"Oh! I hope she won't have to stay at home, poor little thing! I'll run to Aunt Mabel, and ask her what can be done," said Ella, kindly.

"You had better stay and finish dressing, Ella, it's nearly time to go. Fan deserves punishing; she shouldn't have been such a naughty little goose as to black her frock," said Julia.

"But it would be too much punishment for her to be left alone at home," said Ella, as she left the room.

"Harriet might keep her company, she's been complaining all day of a dreadful headache," suggested Julia.

"That I shan't," cried Harriet, indignant at the idea of being so martyred; "my head is well, quite well now."

"What convenient headaches yours are, Harriet, they only last out school-time, and never interfere with play!" said Julia, sarcastically.

"Rivers, might I wear this scarf over my dress?" whispered Sophia, confidentially, and holding up, so as the rest shouldn't see it, a scarf of large pattern and showy colours, part of their play wardrobe, but which Sophia thought good and handsome enough to be worn at court.

"*Non*sense, Miss Sophia, little girls don't wear

scarfs, they only wear pretty frocks like yours," said Rivers, shortly.

Sophia looked disappointed; she had fancied that the gorgeous scarf would be a great addition to her appearance, and that Rivers could not but approve her wearing it.

"Aunt Mabel says Fan may go, if nurse can find her another white dress; one of her every-day ones will do," said Ella, returning.

Fan's sorrowful face brightened, and Floy clapped her hands in glee.

"There now, we shall be late," complained Julia.

"Aunt Mabel isn't quite dressed yet, and we must have waited for her if not for Fan," said Ella.

"Shall I have one of *my* common frocks on too, to make us both alike?" asked good-natured Floy. But nurse would not let her make the sacrifice.

"Never mind, you will still have on your sash and shoes, and they are the prettiest parts of our dress; aren't they, Nursey?" said the little comforter.

"Sophia has her cloak on ready to start! What a hurry she is in to-day! Generally she keeps us all waiting, she is so particular about her hair and sash," said Julia.

"Sophia must take her cloak off again, for we are all going downstairs to kiss mamma, and show her how we look," said Ella.

But Sophia kissed her mamma with her cloak on; she objected to the trouble of taking it off, and did not seem to care about being admired in

her pretty frock, a carelessness very unusual on her part.

It was thought at first that so many could not cram themselves into the carriage, roomy as was the old-fashioned family chariot; but they found it could be managed by the twins becoming babies, and submitting to be nursed.

"There, now we're off," said Ella, gaily, as the wheels began to roll round.

"How's the head, Harriet?" asked Aunt Mabel, slily.

The idea of Harriet's now smiling face having an aching head belonging to it! Harriet was almost impatient at being asked about her head.

"Will little Piertie be there, aunt?" asked Floy, with reference to the party.

Aunt Mabel thought he would, and Floy and Fan were so glad.

"Am I to make any excuse to Mrs. Featheret for this shabby frock of yours, and tell her what a little sweep you made of yourself, Fan?" asked aunt.

"I think, dear aunt, I must tell her myself, because nurse says we ought to tell of ourselves, with our very own mouths, when we have been naughty."

"Well, then, you shall tell her yourself," said Aunt Mabel.

"Oh, Fan! all the mammas will be sitting with Mrs. Featheret; you won't like telling her before so many, many people," cried Floy.

Fan looked rather discouraged, but, after thinking for a moment, said that she thought she might whisper the matter to Mrs. Featheret.

"*Whispering* is most exceedingly rude," pro-

nounced Harriet, whom the governess could not break of this habit.

"Shall aunt ask Mrs. Featheret to let you speak to her alone?" proposed Ella, kindly, seeing that little Fan looked grave and anxious.

Fan liked this plan much, and her aunt promised to make the request.

"I shall stand hand-in-hand with Fan while she tells Mrs. Featheret, and if Mrs. Featheret thinks she has been *very* naughty, I shall say that nurse, and Rivers, and I think her only a little so—just a very tiny scrap bad," said Floy.

"Aren't you well, Sophia?" asked Aunt Mabel, suddenly.

Sophia, who had been unusually silent, and whose face wore rather an anxious look, said hastily that she was quite well.

"Then, what makes you so quiet?" inquired her aunt.

"Oh, she's only thinking of what she will have for tea and supper," suggested Julia.

Sophia said nothing, and just then the carriage stopped at Mrs. Featheret's door.

"We shall all go into the drawing-room till tea is ready, then all the children will go up into the nursery to have tea, and the mammas will have theirs downstairs, and after tea we shall play at plays in the nursery. I know all about it, because I have been here before," chattered Floy, to the amusement of a maid, who was helping the party to uncloak.

Aunt Mabel hushed Floy, who was rather too fond of talking, and asked if all were ready to accompany her into the drawing-room. Ella said they were.

"I don't see Sophia," said Aunt Mabel, glancing round.

"I do believe she has gone on before us; you remember the hurry she was in to set off," said Julia.

Joy and gladness thrilled the hearts of the little Croftons as they were ushered into Mrs. Featheret's drawing-room, and their glances took in groups of young companions, and tables overspread with games, pictures, and other things delightful in the way of amusement. The assembled children numbered about twenty, and were of all sizes, from Kate Ross, aged fourteen, to little Piertie Ashe, a dear pet of two and a half. The mammas, as Floy had prophesied, were all sitting round Mrs. Featheret. Aunt Mabel had scarce finished saying "how do you do" to such of them as she knew, before she felt her gown pulled, and, looking down, met an imploring glance from Fan.

Aunt Mabel smiled, and, turning to Mrs. Featheret, said, in a low tone, "I have promised this little one to ask you to let her tell you something in private."

Mrs. Featheret looked surprised, but she took Fan by her disengaged hand, Floy holding the other fast, and led her to one of the windows, apart from the company.

Fan then drew her little hand out of Mrs. Featheret's, and, standing quite before that lady, said—

"Mrs. Featheret, I have a dress as pretty as this of Floy's; indeed, it is quite the same; but when nurse had dressed me in it, I forgot to be *careful*, and I put coals—which, you know, are

black—on to the nursery fire with my fingers, and dusted my fingers on my dress, and spoilt it; so it is my fault I wear this common frock, not dear mamma's."

Mrs. Featheret replied that she thought it right of Fan to be sorry she had spoiled the dress her mamma intended her to wear, but still she hoped that the misfortune would not prevent her having a very pleasant evening.

Floy was quite satisfied that Mrs. Featheret did not think Fan had been very grievously naughty, and, hand-in-hand, the much-comforted twins turned to join the other children, when they were startled by very merry and very noisy laughter.

Then Aunt Mabel's voice was heard exclaiming—"Sophia, what is the meaning of this nonsense? Who has dressed you up such a figure of fun?"

A figure of fun, Sophia, who had only just come in, did indeed look; all but her face, that was red and downcast, and a contrast to her costume, which was gay and smart in the extreme. There she stood, in her blue dress, enlivened by the showy, large-patterned scarf, and on her head an enormous coiffure of black lace and bugles.

Sophia was too ashamed to utter a word; so, as you may not be able to give so good a guess about the truth as Aunt Mabel did, I must explain how it was that she appeared in Mrs. Featheret's drawing-room so strangely attired.

The fact is, Sophia preferred her own judgment to Rivers's, and so, instead of putting the grand scarf back into the play-box, she retired with it into the nursery, threw it across her shoul-

ders, tied up the long ends, and hastily put her cloak on to conceal it. While doing this her eye lighted on the bugle head-dress, as it sparkled from its corner in the play-box, and the temptation of the *finish* it would be to her costume was too great to be resisted. No cloak would hide that, so as she dared not put it on her head, she pocketed it carefully, and during the drive was planning to herself an opportunity of decorating herself unperceived.

At the time that Julia suggested to Aunt Mabel that Sophia had made her own way into Mrs. Featheret's drawing-room, Sophia was in hiding behind a screen in the hall, and busy arranging her scarf and head-dress. She waited there until the rest of the party were safely gone from the hall; then out she came, and for some moments stood before a pier-glass, rapt in admiration of her dignified and tasty appearance. Her aim now was to get into the drawing-room unperceived, and, uniting with the other children there, to keep out of Aunt Mabel's way.

The ringing of the door-bell announced more guests. "I'll go in with them," said Sophia to herself; and she waited behind the screen until the new arrivals, a lady and two children, strangers to her, were ready to pass on to the drawing-room. Then out marched Sophia, crowned with her enormous head-dress, holding herself erect and stiff that it might not fall off, and in danger of being tripped up by the long dangling ends of her smart scarf. The lady gave a little start as she caught sight of the odd-looking creature following her, and glanced inquiringly at the *maid.*

"I think the children must be having some play, ma'am," explained she.

"Oh, yes, charades, I dare say," said the lady, quite satisfied.

Poor, poor Sophia! she had felt so happy, picturing to herself her triumph in costume over the other children, and their respectful and delighted admiration of her; it was indeed a painful mortification to her to be received with screams and squeaks of laughter from little, less, and least, just as if she were a guy dressed up for their amusement. Even tiny Piertie Ashe crowed out at her derisively, in imitation of the others.

This burst of mocking laughter brought Sophia to her senses, and made her perceive that she had dressed herself up to look ridiculous, and that there was nothing of dignity in either scarf or head-dress. She was now as anxious to be rid of her finery as she had before been anxious to put it on, and wanted to steal out of the room for that purpose; but Aunt Mabel was so angry with her for her wilfulness and cunning that she half threatened to oblige her to wear both scarf and head-dress all the evening, and it was only through Mrs. Featheret's intercession that she was spared so disagreeable a penance.

By this time the twins were quite taken up with little Piertie Ashe. He was a fair, dimpled, baby-beauty, with dark, merry eyes, and a lovely, arch smile. It was interesting to see him touch and handle things, he moved his small hands with such a pretty wilfulness of push and pull; and you had only to ask him, and he would dance for you with all the grace and lightness of a fairy. His only fault, in Floy and Fan's estimation, was that

he would not let them carry him; so soon as either had him in her arms, he struggled to be set down again.

The twins were making him talk, and listening delightedly to his baby lispings.

"What does the pussy say?"

"Miaow," said Piertie, drawling it out in mockery, and looking full of fun.

"What does the goose say?"

"Hiss," said he, showing his little pearls of teeth.

"And what do the birds say?"

"Chirrup, chirrup," said Piertie, very fast, and giving a sharp little nod at each word, as if jerking his head helped him to jerk out such difficult sounds.

Floy and Fan were indeed happy with their pet, and were so good as to share him with some of their little friends, so that Piertie became the entertainer of a whole circle of children.

Ella had joined her friend Kate Ross, who was good-naturedly trying to amuse a little boy in a smart velvet tunic, and with a very cross face, but she had found it a hard task, and was glad to have Ella's assistance.

"Who is the little man?" asked Ella.

"I don't know," replied Kate; "he says his name is 'Master Frederic,' and that his papa is very rich. I'm taking care of him, because he quarrels so with the other children."

"Shall I show you some pictures, and tell you stories about them, Master Frederic?" asked Ella.

"No; I have better pictures at home than *these*," said Master Frederic, looking contemptu-

ously at the book of prints Ella had taken from the table.

"Well, then, will you like the stories?" persisted Ella.

No. The cross little boy knew prettier stories than any she could tell him.

"Then suppose you tell me one?"

"No, I won't," said Master Frederic, shortly.

Kate began to laugh. "There," she said, "I've tried him with everything I could think of, and he will be amused with nothing. He says of each that he has it much better or much prettier at home. What is to be done with him?"

"Perhaps he would like to tell us about what he has at home."

Ella guessed rightly; Master Frederic very much enjoyed telling of his papa's house and park, of his own beautiful pony, and other numerous pets, and of his fine toys.

"Well, I don't admire your taste for boasting, Master Frederic; nevertheless, it's some satisfaction to have discovered something you do like," said Kate, laughing.

Master Frederic did not quite understand Kate's remark; he looked at her half suspicious and half puzzled.

And now tea was ready, and poor Ella had the mortification of hearing herself included amongst the juveniles who were to have tea in the nursery, while Kate Ross, only a year older than herself, and always her companion, was privileged to remain in the drawing-room amongst the elders of the party. Perhaps Ella would not have cared so much about it, but for a look of triumph from Julia, who was of a rather spiteful,

jealous disposition. After receiving this, Ella flushed with anger, and could have boxed the ears of the little monkey of a boy, who, with much courtesy, offered his arm to escort her upstairs.

The reason Ella had been sent up to the nursery was, that from her shortness and very young appearance, Mrs. Featheret had supposed a much greater difference in years between Ella Crofton and Kate Ross than really existed. Mrs. Featheret had no idea but that she would be pleased to be associated with the juveniles, otherwise she would have arranged for her to stay with Kate, as it was far from her desire to hurt the smallest feeling of the smallest of her guests.

One of the upper-servants was pouring out the nursery tea, and Ella shocked her by refusing to have any.

"No tea! nothing to eat or drink! Why, what can be the matter with you?" inquired the servant, who was very anxious that all the little people should enjoy their nice tea and be quite comfortable.

"I think she's cross. Sister Bab threw her orange away yesterday because *she* was cross," said one of the little boys.

"Ella isn't at all cross; she's always kind," said Floy, indignantly.

Ella tried to keep a dignified silence; but presently, to the surprise of everybody, she burst into a merry laugh. It was the idea of "sister Bab" throwing her orange away that so amused her, and the idea, too, that she, the dignified eldest at home, by refusing her tea was just as silly as sister Bab.

"You're a very wise, observing little boy for

having found out the truth. There, Hopkins, I *was* cross, very foolishly cross, but now I should like a cup of tea," said Ella, blushing a little, but with frank grace.

Hopkins helped her most respectfully, and looked at her very approvingly, and her honest avowal won her the favour of all the small people who were able to appreciate it, and they pressed cakes on her from every part of the table.

Before tea was at an end, Kate Ross made her appearance in the nursery, declaring that she had come up to enjoy herself, she had been longing all the time to join the above-stairs' party.

Ella thought to herself, "How wise and sensible Kate is! *She* has no airs of dignity and self-importance, but is simple and happy as Piertie!"

The large nursery was soon cleared of tea and table, and then followed a variety of games, in all of which Master Frederic showed himself perverse, peevish, and masterful. He did not know how to play at them, yet would not be taught, and he blundered, and was so slow, that he spoiled all the fun. Then he did not like this game, and was tired of that, and some one had pushed him, or another had pulled him, and he wanted to fight and bully, and was all boast and pettishness. He also kept teasing to have some game that the others didn't understand, and that he couldn't explain, and was much aggrieved that he couldn't have his own impossible way.

Very different from Master Frederic was little Piertie Ashe. He had shaken his tiny self free of Floy and Fan, and the other children who wished to lead him about and take care of him, and was

in every part of the room with his lively, independent hop, and merry countenance. He had been upset several times, but had only crowed with delight over his falls, as if they were so much fun. At length, however, Master Frederic, through wanton mischief, gave him a hard, spiteful push, that sent his poor little head against a chair with some violence. Piertie could not help a cry, he was so hurt; but he was very brave and good, and soon dried his tears, and let his bruise be cured by the kisses of his many comforters. All the children were extremely sorry for him, and very much disgusted with Master Frederic for his cruel conduct. Some of them declared they would not play with him again; and one of them, a spirited-looking little fellow, named Cecil Freer, called him a coward.

"I'm not a coward—I'll fight you—I'll fight everybody," cried Master Frederic, fiercely.

Cecil was quite ready to begin, but Clarence Featheret, an older boy, stepped forward and declared a fight impossible; there couldn't be such a thing at a party. Then Clarence and Kate Ross seemed to be holding a consultation together, and after it they both went about the room whispering to some of the others some mysterious communication, with which each, as he heard it, seemed highly delighted.

"What are we to do now?" asked some of the little ones presently, tired of being quiet.

"What do you say to a lecture by way of change?" proposed Clarence.

"Yes, yes! Let's have a lecture," was the eager response; "but who will give it?"

"*Let* us put the question to the meeting,"

said Clarence, gravely, and asked, "Who will lecture?"

"I will," said forward Master Frederic.

"No, no, no! he can't lecture; we won't listen to him."

"I propose that Clarence Featheret himself be lecturer," said Kate Ross.

There were delighted cries of "Yes," and joyful clappings of hands.

"I was only going to be chairman," said Clarence.

"Oh, I'll be chairman," said Kate, laughing.

At this obliging offer there was another pleased clapping of hands.

"I don't like lectures; I shall make a noise and not listen," threatened Master Frederic.

"Shall we bring in more chairs?" asked several voices, not heeding Master Frederic's interruption.

"Yes, and the table too; we shall want it as the foundation of a castle of chairs," said Clarence.

"A castle of chairs! what is it for?" inquired a few, the majority seeming to know all about it.

"It is to be a sort of royal box—a grand reserved seat for the bravest and highest person in the room."

"Then it will be for me, I am the bravest and highest person in the room; I could fight you all, and my papa is so rich he can buy me everything I please to have," said Master Frederic, and he became as eager for the lecture as were the others.

"Then I suppose you haven't pleased to want the moon yet?" answered some one.

"No, of course not, I'm not a silly," said Master Frederic.

The few children who had inquired the purpose of the castle of chairs, did not seem to think it fair that Master Frederic should be exalted to it; but after a whispered persuasion from Clarence and Kate, they very readily agreed to his being distinguished as the bravest and highest in the room. With the aid of some pieces of rope, a strong and magnificent tower of chairs soon lifted its top to near the ceiling, and Master Frederic, as he watched its progress, strutted about feeling himself every inch king of the castle.

"But how am I to get up?" asked he, when the fine structure was quite complete.

"I'm glad it isn't *how am I to get down?*" whispered Clarence to Kate, and then added aloud, "Oh, getting up is easy enough. Cecil will lend a hand, and we'll soon have you up."

Cecil lent a strong little hand, and Master Frederic was shortly safely seated at the top of the tower, and perhaps felt rather uncomfortable at being so "up to the ceiling." But he didn't like to say so, as it would be confessing himself not the brave person he pretended to be, so he smiled as if quite happy and perfectly at ease.

"Here's a great chair for the chairman," said Clarence, wheeling it to its right place.

"Here's a box for the lecturer to stand on, to make him tall and proper," said Cecil.

"Now mind what you're about! I can call you all to order now," said Kate, taking possession of the chair.

"Kate, what in the world am I to lecture *about?*" whispered Clarence.

"Lecture about! Oh, anything. You can say just whatever rubbish comes into your mind."

"There, that's just what they tell me when they want me to write a letter but it never helps me a bit. It's of no use saying *anything* will do, when I can't think of *anything*."

"Can't you think of anything?" wondered Kate.

"Well, the only thing that occurs to me is a fable; Master Frederic reminds me of it, and I should like to tell it."

"Tell it by all means, I am sure it will do nicely," said Kate, encouragingly.

"But I can't make a lecture out of it," said Clarence.

"Well, only begin with the fable, and then branch off to the lecture."

"How *do* people lecture, I've never noticed?" asked Clarence.

"They begin with—*Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen*,—and I heard a lecture once in which the lecturer began every sentence with, 'It's very curious;' you can do the same if you like."

"Oughtn't I to have 'notes,' or something in my hand?" asked Clarence.

"Yes; I'll rummage out something of a book for you, while you go out and come in again fresh. But make haste; don't you hear how impatient they are for you to begin?"

"One moment, Kate, won't the little ones be frightened?" asked Clarence.

"What, Piertie Ashe! Never! The brave little dear will think it fun, and Floy and Fan know."

"Ladies and gentlemen I beg to introduce to

you Professor Clarence Featheret, who will now favour us with a lecture on—what he will tell you," said the chairman, addressing the assembly after *Master* Clarence Featheret had left the room, and *Professor* Clarence Featheret had appeared in his stead.

("Hear, hear," and approving claps and stamps.)

"Mrs. Chairwoman, ladies, and gentlemen," commenced the Professor, "it's very curious, but before I begin the lecture, I am going to tell you a fable." (Hear, hear.) "It's very curious, but in one of the warm countries of Europe there's a bird called St. Martin's bird, a very small creature with long legs like thin twigs. It's very curious, but one hot summer day this bird lay on its back to enjoy the sunshine, its meagre legs in the air, and, puffed with a great idea of itself, it boasted, 'Ah! if the sky were to fall now, I could hold it up with my legs;' but just then a leaf fell down from the tree, and, it's very curious, but the bird flew away in terror, screaming out, 'Oh! St. Martin, St. Martin, come and help your little bird!' There, that's my fable; and, it's very curious, ladies and gentlemen, but I can't help wondering if any one here present is like St. Martin's little bird?"

"I'm not; I shouldn't scream out and run away for anything," said Master Frederic confidently. He had got over his feeling of giddiness, and was sitting proud as became him, and looking down in superb contempt on those beneath him.

"The lecture; the lecture!" was called out impatiently.

"Ladies and gentlemen," recommenced Pro*fessor* Clarence Featheret, "it's very curious, but

the subject of my lecture is Railway Trains" (Clarence, unable to think of *anything*, had glanced down on the book of Kate's finding, to get a hint from it, and discovered it to be an old "Bradshaw"; this accounts for his device of a subject,) "and I hope that before I wind up, not an individual here present but would bear an examination as to the starting point of every train on every railway in England, their respective destinations, the stations they stop at on the way, the times of arrival at and departure from each, the lines of navigation and of the electric telegraph, the official sailings of all the steam vessels during the month, to and from every port and station throughout the United Kingdom, and in a large variety of local and valuable information, collected, compiled, and arranged exclusively for this occasion." (Hear, hear.) "It's very curious, but I shall commence with the Oystermouth line (Swansea to Mumbles). We will suppose, for the sake of supposing, that the 8.15 A.M. train from Swansea consists of twenty carriages"—(hear, hear)—"or of twenty-one carriages"—(hear, hear)—"or of twenty-two carriages" . . . . .

The lecturer came to a stop, for sudden darkness had fallen upon the assembly, the lights having been mysteriously put out. Then were heard from various parts of the room loud cries of "A ghost! a ghost! a spirit! a spirit!" Piertie Ashe's shrill squeak of "A pivet! a pivet!" being the loudest. Professor, chairman, audience, scrambled to the door and made their escape through it, closing it after them, and leaving Master Frederic alone in his extreme fright, and yelling to be helped down from the royal box.

"What fun it is! but we musn't let him scream too long," said Ella, who, with others, was standing on the landing of the stairs enjoying Master Frederic's terror.

"There, that's the drawing-room door opening! Mamma and the whole bang of ladies will be coming up to know what's the matter," cried Clarence, and he seized a lamp from a window seat and hurried into the nursery, the rest following.

Master Frederic's screams ceased at the reappearance of the light, and he looked rather ashamed of himself for the noise he had been making.

"Oh, St. Martin, St. Martin! come and help your little bird," said Clarence, laughing, as he aided Master Frederic to descend.

"It's only been a trick, then, a trick to frighten me," said Master Frederic, sullenly.

"A trick to frighten *you*, Master Frederic! How could we imagine you frightenable, you declared yourself so brave?"

"I shouldn't have been afraid, only you all said there was a ghost," said Master Frederic.

"But you know there are no such things as ghosts, so there was really nothing more to be frightened at than the falling of a leaf," reasoned Clarence.

"I can't say that I should have enjoyed being left towered up in the dark," whispered Ella to Clarence.

"Perhaps not," said he, "but then you don't ever imagine of yourself that if the sky were to fall you could hold it up! Master Frederic does, and has had a lesson for it."

Mrs. Featheret, as Clarence had expected, came up to inquire the reason of so much noise of screaming, and, when informed of it, lectured the elders of the party for the trick played off upon Master Frederic. "The fright might have done him very serious injury," said she, "frightening people is very dangerous fun, if fun it can be called."

"We're very sorry for it's having been a dangerous trick," said Kate, "but we couldn't think of any other way of punishing Master Frederic for his cruelty to little Piertie."

"I'm not quite sure that you were called on to punish him at all," said Mrs. Featheret, half smiling, and then added more seriously, "if, as might have been the case, Master Frederic had been driven into fits by his fright, the punishment would have been to yourselves, and a very grievous one I can assure you."

And now that there is nothing more of interest to relate concerning it, we will take our leave of Mrs. Featheret's small guests, and retire from her party.

AUNT ROSE'S SEVRES VASE.

IT happened that I was the only girl in a large family of boys. I now love my brothers very much, and am very proud of them; but I can well remember thinking them much too rough, noisy, and mischievous for my comfort in life, and feeling, from painful experiences in games that they would make me join in, that what was play to them, was very near death to me. In addition to this, my mother was a great invalid, and could not have me with her; and my father was too busy and anxious to notice me, so that at home I was almost what would be called a neglected child.

I don't think I was enough aware of this to pity myself for it; but yet I often felt dull and miserable, especially after my few toys, or anything that I treasured up carefully and tidily had been made spoil of by those ruthless big boys, and wantonly destroyed before my very eyes. I don't suppose my brothers knew the amount of *torture* they inflicted upon me, but in their

presence I was always in a panic, lest I should be teased. It was dreadful to be screeched at, as they screeched at me; it was tormenting to have my long, thin hair knotted up beyond the power of fingers to undo; it was terrifying to have to hold for them a dog that might be of a savage turn; it was trying to the nerves to be obliged to make experimental trips in a ricketty truck or barrow of their own construction. What a contrast to these endurances were my visits to Aunt Rose!

Aunt Rose was my father's youngest sister, and my favourite relation. She was a gentle, sweet-tempered lady, and had always kind, cheerful looks and words for children. Then, her cottage was so pretty, and everything in and about it so daintily neat and refined! Sojourning in the Nest, the name of the cottage, I was as prettily housed as fairy in a flower-cup.

The Nest was a small gabled dwelling, becreepered to the chimneys, and with windows opening on to a lawn terrace. From this a few broad stone steps led down to a garden of dark shrubs and fair flowers—my delight at all seasons of the year. The rooms of the cottage were small but elegantly shaped and decorated, and there wasn't one article of furniture that was too large for them, so that there seemed as much space in the Nest as in our own large house cumbered up with beds of Ware, and tables and chairs suited to Og, Gog, and Magog. The room my aunt set apart for me was in neatness, whiteness, and simplicity, a very nun's cell; but that which I most admired in the Nest was my aunt's

boudoir, a tiny closet opening out from her sleeping-room, and which contained the prettiest ornaments I had ever seen.

My aunt was very choice of these ornaments (they were presents, I believe), and let no one touch them but herself. I was very glad to be with her when she was dusting them, as while they were in her hands I was allowed as close an examination of them as I pleased. The one that I liked best was a beautiful and most valuable vase of Sèvres china, with almost as lovely gradations of colouring upon it as upon a rose petal. This stood alone upon a chiffonier. I remember asking my aunt why she did not let this vase be in the drawing-room, as where it was placed it did not show to the best advantage. She answered that a companion vase to this had been broken by a careless visitor, who had brushed it off its stand with his coat, and that then she had removed this one to the boudoir to be out of danger. My aunt then told me of its value, and gave me a description of the Sèvres factory, and of the processes the vase had gone through before becoming the beautiful specimen of art it was.

And now I must tell you of my aunt's establishment. This consisted of two maids, Joan and Nancy, both favourites of mine, of a gardener, and of a benign, grave black cat, large and handsome, and the pet of all in the house.

Muffly-Tuffly was better behaved than the generality of cats, so could be admitted to more privileges. At breakfast and tea he sat on the tea-board, in winter close by the warm teapot. At dinner he had a special mat put for him, and *after he* had been fed, sat upon it in a trussed atti-

tude, and was the *pièce de résistance* of all courses. He never obtruded nose or paw upon me or aunt, but with visitors (assuming that they would not dare snub Miss Leslie's favourite cat) he was less reserved. I once saw him claw a last dear morsel of crumpet from the fingers of an elderly lady, who, listening to some conversation, was looking another way. Muffly-Tuffly, when he had eaten his buttered spoil on the floor, reappeared on the table, and sat down grave and unabashed. At night Muffly-Tuffly nested on a duvet in my aunt's room—that is when he would come in. But the difficulty was to get him in, for he was often of pensive mood, and preferred sitting on the terrace looking up at the moon, to the comforts of home and a cushion of down. When we—that is, my aunt, Joan, and I—went out to look for him, there sat his black self with tucked-in paws, eyes opened wide at the pretty silvery moon, and a pretence of being poetically absorbed. I used to think I could catch him nicely; but no sooner were my hands within reach of him than, with a gentle, startled cry, a monosyllabic pur, he gave a bound to a tree, tried his powers in a preliminary sharpening of his claws upon the trunk, and then darted up to the top of it. Joan had invented a supper-call for him; she tambourined with a knife upon a plate. But this did not always succeed, and Aunt Rose had either to sit up late for the rover, or to open her window some time in the night for his catship. She could not be easy while he remained out, for a hater of cats in the neighbourhood was accustomed to set traps for them, and aunt could not forget that one morning, after a night out, Muffly-Tuffly had come in with a thickish wire

round his neck a scared look, and an appearance of having undergone a severe struggle. The whole household were horrified at his near escape from a violent death, for it was evident that our treasured Muffly-Tuffly had been caught in a springe, and that only his superior strength and intelligence in directing it, had enabled him to get free. Aunt kept the wire as a trophy, and from that time was never easy at night unless her pet was safe upon his duvet. And now, with the additional information that when he chose, Muffly-Tuffly moused with skill and success, I must for a time leave him, to return to myself.

I want to tell you how happy I was at the Nest, especially in summer time. I then rose early, and, in fine weather, went down into the garden. Here I knew each flower, and they were all so many companions to me. I dearly loved flowers, and I can remember, in these morning hours, tenderly touching some of my favourites, or even kissing them, and being very sorrowful over the fading ones. My heart, too, yearned after the birds. There they sat in the trees and bushes, chirruping or pluming themselves for the day. Oh, how I wished that they would not be afraid of me, but would come about me, as I had seen a picture of their perching about Eve in the Garden of Eden. Then I had my own small plot of ground to dig up, plant, or weed. This was kept almost meanly neat by too frequent rakings, but I was very proud of its weedless state, and also of a bunch of fine white lilies that graced it. Unknown to my aunt or to any one, I had a weed garden—a *bare patch* redeemed from the orchard, into which

I transplanted the weeds from my flower-bed, for I could not bear uprooting things to die.

Sometimes, when I hadn't much gardening to do, I came back to the cottage to see breakfast laid. To keep out a side gleam of sunshine, the blind of the morning-room was down just so low as that, looking in through the window from the outside, I could not see Joan's head, but only her hands, as she set on the breakfast things. Children have strange whims. It was one of mine to like to watch those hands moving about on the breakfast table, and see no head belonging to them.

What an appetizing breakfast it looked and was! The cloth so white, and such a satiny gloss on it; the pretty china and brilliant silver. Then the bread was home-made, and the butter so creamy-looking, and of such artistic design of pat, that it seemed a pity knife should attack it. The eggs were mine, for the hens that laid them were my property, and I had brought the eggs in from the nest myself. I can assure you that breakfast, as well as tea—yes, and I must say dinner too—was a delightful meal to sit down to, and that I really did enjoy spreading for myself instead of being served, as at home, from a large plate of thick bread and butter, and no appetite to relish it.

After breakfast we had a pretty shady walk to the church, the spire of which could be seen amongst the green trees from my bed-room window, and as soon as we returned from morning service I had my school. I was not fond of lessons, and dear Aunt Rose made them as light and pleasant to me as possible. I did very little, but was obliged to take great care to do that little in my best manner. My principal task was to read

aloud, aunt explaining to and questioning me at every point, and I must say I gained more by these readings than by anything learnt by rote. My lessons at an end, aunt found me interesting employment in sorting or arranging for her, or I took to my favourite occupation of drawing. I made many pictures of Aunt Rose, of Joan, Nancy, Muffly-Tuffly and the Nest, and sometimes I got a new subject for my pencil in the interior of some cottage that aunt took me with her to visit.

There was but little variety in my days at the Nest, but I never felt dull there as at home, or unhappy but in the thoughts of leaving it, though I never begged to remain over the time appointed for my visit, as I had a great dread of being troublesome. I had early in life been made to feel that I could be an inconvenience, and, as I knew myself to be a plain, quiet, unamusing child, I could not imagine that Aunt Rose would miss me, but believed that my going away from her was painful only to myself. Ah! to me it was pain, and grief, and desolation, only that I had the hope before me of putting in practice the patience and courage she had enjoined me, for it was she who first taught me that all my small though sharp crosses and troubles were sent to make a higher, holier character of me than I could get to be without them.

But now to my story.

I had just entered upon my eleventh year, and was spending my birth-month, July, with Aunt Rose, when ten o'clock one bright morning found us both in the pretty boudoir, which was on the cool side of the cottage. Aunt was dusting her *ornaments*, and I was getting the books ready for

school. We had only just returned from church, and were both glad of the refreshing coolness of the boudoir, for notwithstanding shade, we had found the walk hot. Window and door were both open, and I sat in what draught there was, or rather was not, for the air was so still that the honeysuckle and roses trying to peep in at the window could scarcely nod to us. I was sorry for aunt to move about, hot as it was; but I knew she wouldn't let me help her, so I did not offer to do so. I was more sorry when Joan brought a message for poor aunt that obliged her to go out to give some directions about frames that were being made in the garden. I wanted to go with her, but as the evening before I had been rather poorly from the effects of too much exposure to the heat, Aunt Rose would not let me, but told me to remain in the boudoir till she came back.

To occupy myself I began a copy, but I had scarcely done two lines of it when I heard Muffly-Tuffly's cry of greeting, and in jumped the dear thing from the window. Muffly-Tuffly was always a great interruption to work of mine, for I could not see him appear without wanting to nurse, kiss, or at least stroke him. But this morning, I suppose, because it was so hot, he did not like being nursed, but scrambled down from my lap and disappeared in aunt's bed-room, the door of which from the boudoir was open. Alas for being an idle child! this small disturbance made me feel lazy about writing, and to wish to amuse myself with drawing instead. Was there anything I could copy? I looked up, and before me stood the Sèvres china vase, the thing of all others that I should best like to draw. I got

out a piece of waste paper from my desk and had soon sketched the graceful outline of the vase. I could do this looking at it from where I sat. But I wanted to copy the landscape on the vase, and being near-sighted I wanted my model nearer to me. I knew I mustn't touch it, and I felt no inclination to disobey my dear aunt, but I might get up to it. So I set my chair before the cabinet, and having put aunt's duster in it for me to tread on, I mounted it, paper and pencil in hand, and in a few minutes had traced out trees and sky ready for filling in and shading at the table. As I jumped down from the chair, I met the eyes—not of my aunt (how I wish she had come in then) but of Muffly-Tuffly, who I suppose had been watching my proceedings. But I was now too busy to notice him, and leaving the chair at the cabinet in case I might require it there, I drew another to the table and sat down to finish my picture. I hadn't made many touches at it when I was startled by the sound of a fall and breakage, and, looking up, I turned cold with sorrow, for on the floor before me lay the Sèvres vase all broken to pieces! How could it fall, I thought, when who should jump down from the cabinet but Muffly-Tuffly, and I knew at once that he had done the mischief. I had been too absorbed in drawing to hear him mount there, if indeed he made any noise in mounting, and for the rest he had always been admitted into the boudoir, and been left there unwatched, so that I felt clear of blame for this terrible accident. But would aunt believe my account of it? I knew that at home I shouldn't have been believed. My brothers *always* declared that I told falsehoods when I

denied things laid to my charge, and they so bullied and flustered my innocence that I often let them believe of me what they pleased, rather than attempt to defend myself. Then I had a habit of blushing when falsely accused, and this was always taken in proof of my guilt.

"Somebody has broken the window," was said. "Look at Grace how she blushes, she must have done it," was often the answer. And yet I had not broken the window nor known anything about it. I was so accustomed to their accusations, that I was hardened to them; in fact, at home, though I really tried my best to be good, I was always in some trouble, and always being scolded. The Nest had been a refuge to me in every sense. I seemed as safe from being naughty there, as from being unjustly blamed. Joan had even said that I was too good for a child. But now they would suspect me of falsehood, and think that all along I had only been a little hypocrite. There stood the chair against the cabinet, there on the table was my drawing of the vase, and my face would be tell-tale red, and my tongue would stammer when I told about the accident. "Oh, aunt will indeed think I broke the vase, and that I want to hide my carelessness and lay the blame on poor Muffly-Tuffly," said I, aloud, as, bewildered and miserable, I stood looking at the beautiful fragments.

Alas! my fears were but too true. I saw in Aunt Rose's face that she did not believe that Muffly-Tuffly had had anything to do with the breaking of the vase.

"It is strange, Grace," said she, fixing her eyes on mine that would drop, truthful though

they were, "Muffly-Tuffly has never done mischief of the kind before, and I have never seen him attempt to mount furniture beyond the chairs and dining-table."

"I didn't break the vase," said I, awkwardly, and it was about the worst thing I could have said, for it was like accusing myself. My face burnt, and I am sure was crimson. Aunt answered me with a heavy sigh, and left the room.

I sat down heart-broken. "No one will love me now," I thought, and I began to cry and sob. Something soft touched my cheek as I leant on the table, and removing my hands from my eyes I perceived it was Muffly-Tuffly. I fancied he had a sorrowful look, and was pitying me. I took him in my arms and burying my face in his fur, I said, "Oh, Muffly-Tuffly, I don't mean to scold you, but you have been very cruel to me. Why did you break the vase, and why can't you speak to tell my dear aunt you did it? You have spoilt all my happiness, and turned me away from the Nest, for I can't stay here now aunt thinks me a story-teller and does not love me."

I did not cry long, for I was not of a tearful nature, but I was very miserable the rest of the day, and the first part of the night, until I went to sleep. Aunt Rose was kind as usual, but I could not now be happy in her kindness, feeling that she no longer thought me an honest, guileless child, but a deceitful little creature, for whom she could only feel pity, not respect or love. I remember in those last days of that unhappy visit, that what was most grief to me was to think *of how* Aunt Rose must be hurt at my ingrati-

tude to her. Joan and Nancy did not mention the accident to me, but they looked very sad, and all that they said to me on other subjects was spoken gently and pityingly, and I knew from this they both thought me guilty, and were very sorry for me. Indeed, I overheard Joan say to Nancy, "I wish the poor little thing would confess and say she'd done it; she'll have a heavy heart till she do."

"I do wish she'd owned it from the first," returned Nancy; "it's bad to lay your faults on a dumb thing that can't speak to defend itself."

"Well, it's to be expected the child should have some faults," said the kind-hearted Joan, "only think of the good, meek little thing, she's been all through her visits here, and never done anything a bit wrong till now!"

I did not stay to hear Nancy's reply. Joan's love for me touched me to make me cry, and I ran off to hide myself in my own room. Neither of the maids knew I had been by while they were talking.

I believe my aunt had told Joan not to talk to me about the vase, or she would in her simple but earnest way have tried to persuade me to tell the truth at all hazards. She used to look at me so wistfully whenever we met, as if she yearned to advise me for my good. Aunt Rose, for some days after the accident, did not mention the subject to me, but at last she broke the ice. It was one morning just after she had, with infinite pains, succeeded in cementing together the bits of the broken vase. "I have taken a great deal of trouble to mend my poor bit of Sèvres china," said she, speaking gently, but not looking up at me;

"I was very fond of my vase, Grace knows that, but I am afraid she does not quite know how far dearer she is to me than ornaments, furniture, house, than all I have in the world."

My kind aunt's voice trembled as she said this, and I am sure she was feeling deeply for me. How I longed to rush to her, throw my arms round her neck, and tell her in language that she could not doubt that I had told no falsehood, that she might love me still, and that I loved her with all my heart! Now I longed to do this, and yet how impossible was it for me to speak or move. I felt nervous and awkward, but I dare say I seemed to be only sullen and obstinate.

And this was the last said to me about the broken vase during the painful remainder of my visit. For it was painful to stay at the Nest now that every one doubted me, and though distressed beyond measure to leave it and its dear inmates, and not know if I might ever again re-visit it and them, it was yet a relief to me to be fetched away.

I had made up my mind that home would be more than ever wretched now that I could not look forward to happy visits to Aunt Rose. But while I was thinking of how slowly and sadly year after year would go by, it came into my mind to add to my petitions to God one that He would make dear Aunt Rose believe that I had spoken the truth. I had great comfort in this prayer, for I nothing doubted that God would work a miracle to answer it; that He would send some angel, or some wonderful dream to enlighten Aunt Rose of my truth, and every letter that came from the

Nest I could have inquired, not, "has aunt invited me?" but, "has she seen the angel?"

Meanwhile autumn and winter passed away, and it was nine months since I had seen Aunt Rose; a longer time than had ever before elapsed between my visits to the Nest. During all this time I had tried to be good and patient, and not be fretful at my brothers' teasing. I could perceive they were getting fonder of me, and began to consider me more of a companion, and less of a victim than they had before done. During their Easter holidays I had been persuaded into taking walks beyond my strength with them, and the consequence was that I fell ill of low fever. I had had the same kind of illness once before, and then Aunt Rose nursed me, and I now had the idea that only herself could nurse me back to health again, and that if she did not come to me I should die. But I did not like to ask her to be sent for, I only prayed the more fervently that I might not die before she had learnt to believe me true.

At first I had only our new servant about me, but I suppose I grew worse, and that my father sent for Aunt Rose; for one evening, waking up from what seemed a long sleep, my eyes opened on her loved face, bending over me as when she used to tuck me up for the night in my little bed at the Nest.

"God has brought you to me," said I faintly, finding it difficult to speak.

"Yes, Grace, God has brought me to you," said my aunt earnestly, stooping to kiss me.

"Did He send you an angel?" I eagerly asked.

"You have been the angel, Grace," said my aunt, her eyes filling with tears.

I did not then understand her, I only knew that all was right, and that she believed me; I did not know how the truth had been made known to her.

It was when I was a little stronger to talk and listen, that I learnt in what way my prayer had been answered, answered naturally, though as effectually as if by special miracle. I had been delirious, and in my ravings had given to an angel, as I thought, but in reality to Aunt Rose, a touching history of my grief in not being believed about the vase, and I had prayed too—my prayer—that God would make Aunt Rose know that I had not deceived her.

"Oh, Grace, my dear child," said Aunt, as she finished telling me this, "your unconscious words were indeed as if an angel had spoken, and when I was fearing that you would soon become one, my punishment for having doubted you was indeed great."

"You couldn't help suspecting me, aunt," said I.

"I don't know that," said Aunt Rose reflectively; "I daresay it was through some feeling of pride in my own discernment. We none of us like being simple and harmless, we must needs be sharp and sagacious, no matter whom we injure in thought, and how many of our neighbours we let live and die falsely suspected."

In about a fortnight's time I was well enough to journey to the Nest. I went there, not as Aunt *Rose's* visitor, but as her little adopted daughter, *though it* was arranged I should always be at

home during my brother's holidays, and that I should help to nurse my mother when old enough to be of assistance and comfort to her.

Joan and Nancy met me with bright faces. They were as happy to be my servants as I was to be their new little mistress, and Muffly-Tuffly, in his own way, seemed to acknowledge that he was now partly my cat.

So aunt and I, as mother and daughter, spent happy springs, summers, and Christmases in the Nest, and now and then one of the big, riotous boys from home came there to be tamed, and to prevent my getting old-fashioned for want of a play-fellow. Excepting my visits home, this was all the change that occurred in our lives till Nancy married, and dear Muffly-Tuffly, in a good old age, was laid at the foot of a grey-lichened orchard tree. We had a Phebe in the place of Nancy; but we had no new pet in the place of Muffly-Tuffly. A kitchen cat, with no soul above rats and mice, was kept to the back premises; and beyond an occasional stroke, which it did not value, got no notice or encouragement from us. But one of my best likenesses of Muffly-Tuffly hung up framed in the boudoir, and not a day passed but some dear reminiscence of him was on my aunt's lips or on mine.

My life was indeed a happy one. I had once gone from the Nest sorrowing under false suspicion, but I had returned to it in joy and peace. "He that now goeth on his way weeping, and bearing forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him." The sheaves that I had brought with me were comprised in this lesson, impressed on me by the

issue of the incident of the broken vase. "Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." The hairs of our head are all numbered: are not, then, our least troubles and difficulties taken count of—taken count of, that God may help us in them, if only we make known our requests to Him?

Aunt Rose is now asleep near the church spire that shows amongst the green trees. The Nest and its belongings are mine, and the cross upon my aunt's grave is, in all seasons, garlanded with flowers and leaves from the garden that her gentle presence has for ever endeared to me.

I am not alone in the Nest. A small child runs up and downstairs to me, and about the garden paths; a little orphan girl whom I have adopted, and whose life I am trying to make happy as Aunt Rose made mine.

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